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Thomas F. Torrance



LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

BY THE LATE

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LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

LECTURE XXVI.

ON GOD.

HIS TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS.—TRUTH OF HIS COMMUNICATIONS TO MAN THROUGH THE SENSES, REASON, AND BY REVELATION.—FAITHFULNESS OF HIS PROMISES.—REMARKS RESPECTING THE PROMISES.—EXAMPLES OF PERFORMANCE.—FAITHFULNESS OF HIS THREATENINGS.—SINCERITY OF HIS INVITATIONS TO SINNERS.—THE NATURE OF GOD INCAPABLE OF ERROR OR DECEIT.

I PROCEED now to consider the truth and faithfulness of God. When we call him the true God, we distinguish him from those to whom this designation has been improperly given, and affirm, that he has not only the name, but the nature and perfections of God. “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, but our God is in the heavens.” When we call him the God of truth, our design is not to assert his Divinity, but to illustrate his character; and we declare that an undeviating regard to truth marks all his communications to mankind; that he never deceives them, but treats them with the same openness and sincerity which they are required to observe in their intercourse with one another. Did we not believe that truth is an attribute of God, we should be involved in the utmost uncertainty, and driven to absolute scepticism. For aught that we could tell, human life might be a dream. Truth would be known, if known at all, only as a thing unattainable; and wandering in endless doubt and perplexity, we should close our comfortless existence, without being able to tell whence we had come, and whither we were going. A

Divine revelation would afford no satisfaction, because amidst the subversion of all evidence, it would be impossible to ascertain that it had proceeded from the Author of our being ; and even although this point were settled, we could not determine whether its statements were worthy of credit. The truth of God gives validity to the deductions of reason, and is the foundation of faith. " Let God be true, but every man a liar." * In this emphatic manner does an Apostle affirm that truth is essential to God. Whatever may become of the veracity of men, who may be induced by temptation to deceive, the Divine veracity shall never be justly impeached.

When we speak of truth as one of his perfections, we assume, that the communications which have been made by him to men accord with the nature of things, and are genuine expressions of his views and intentions. Falsehood consists in designed misrepresentation of the subject of discourse, and in creating expectations which we do not mean to realize, in affirming that that is which is not, and that we will do what we have resolved not to do. There are different ways in which God has made declarations to us ; by our senses, by reason, and by revelation. On each of these we shall bestow some observations ; and with respect to the last, in which we are so deeply concerned, I shall consider the doctrines which it proposes to our faith, the promises which awaken our hopes, the threatenings which are addressed to our fears, and shew that these, as well as the invitations, entreaties, and exhortations with which the Scriptures abound, are characterised by veracity and sincerity.

In the first place, God is true in all his declarations. These are made to us, first, through the medium of our senses, by which we acquire the knowledge of external objects. We are impelled by the law of our nature, to give implicit credit to their testimony, to believe that objects exist without us, that they are invested with certain forms, and endowed with certain qualities, and arranged in a certain order. The evidence of sense has indeed been controverted, and what is there that vanity and ill intention have not endeavoured to perplex ? and some philosophers have maintained that matter does not

* Rom. iii. 4.

exist; that the sun, the earth, trees, men, and animals, are merely ideas in our minds. Their arguments may have puzzled those who could not readily detect their fallacy, but have not, I presume, produced conviction in a single instance. Their reasoning had no effect upon themselves; and while they pretended that the universe was a phantom, they were as careful as other men not to throw themselves into fire or water, or to leap over a precipice. It is acknowledged, that our senses do not make us acquainted with the internal nature of objects; but this can only be called an imperfection, and does not invalidate the certainty of the information which they do give us. As far as they go, they are faithful instructors, who convey to us the knowledge of the qualities or properties of things, but leave us in ignorance of their essences, because the knowledge of these, if we were capable of it, would be of no real utility. We may be content not to know what matter is, since we know its primary and secondary qualities, for this knowledge is sufficient for all the purposes of life. Our senses do indeed sometimes deceive us; but it is only when they are in a diseased state, or when they are disadvantageously situated for making observations, or when we are too hasty in drawing conclusions. When all the requisite conditions are provided; when the eye, for example, is perfect, the object is at a due distance, and the degree of light is sufficient to exhibit it clearly, and when we take a deliberate view of it, it appears to us exactly as it ought to appear according to the laws of vision. We find ourselves safe and comfortable in acting according to the notices of our senses, and under their guidance, in subservience to reason, the human race has been preserved for thousands of years.

God also communicates knowledge to us by the medium of reason. It must be acknowledged that reason often errs, but it is not therefore a fallacious faculty. It discovers many truths, physical and moral, in which the mind rests with full confidence. There were philosophers in ancient times who avowed universal scepticism, maintaining that certainty was unattainable upon any subject, and that the utmost at which we can arrive is probability; but their system has been rejected by all rational men. Truth may often lie at the bot-

tom of a well, but in most cases we are furnished with the means of drawing it up. The fallibility of reason is, however, indisputable, and the many mistakes into which men have been betrayed are proofs of it. Yet if we give due attention, we shall perceive that these are not so much owing to the faculty itself, as to the abuse of it. If we employ it upon subjects which lie beyond its sphere, we shall be led into the region of hypothesis and conjecture. If we proceed hastily, without going through the process of regular investigation; if we draw general inferences from partial premises; if we begin with prejudice, and are guided by passion, we have no right to complain that we have gone wrong, for we have voluntarily turned into a devious path. Reason, properly used, is a guide to man in all matters which belong to its jurisdiction; but as it was not intended to suffice for all purposes, nor bestowed that he might be independent of his Maker, he ought to look up to the Source of wisdom, and receive with gratitude the extraordinary or supernatural discoveries, with which he has been pleased to favour him.

With respect to these communications, we affirm that they are true in all their parts; that whether they relate to doctrines or to facts, they are free from the slightest mixture of falsehood. That the Scriptures are the word of God, is not a point to be believed upon their own naked testimony, any more than a man is to be believed in any matter relating to himself simply upon his own affirmation. A book, indeed, may contain internal marks of divinity, in the sublimity of its doctrines, the holiness of its precepts, the harmony of its parts, and its power to affect the conscience and heart; or it may betray its human origin by the meanness of its sentiments, its licentious tenets, its manifest errors and contradictions. But although we may be convinced by internal evidence, that the Scriptures are a revelation from God, and every man, who is enlightened and renewed by the Holy Ghost, has the witness in himself that they are true; yet our belief of their heavenly origin rests, in the first place, upon external evidence, upon ancient and catholic tradition, referring them to the times when, and the persons by whom, they are said to have been written, upon the miracles by which the commission of the

Prophets and Apostles was attested, and upon the prophecies which have been fulfilled, or are at present fulfilling. Having ascertained in this manner, that God has made a declaration to mankind upon subjects of importance, and in what documents it is contained, we are bound to receive it with profound respect. And here it is proper to remark, that the office of reason in reference to a revelation, is not to discuss its contents, to try them by its own standard, and to approve or disapprove, as they agree or disagree with it; for this would be to treat it as if it were not a revelation, at the moment when we acknowledge it to be such, or to insinuate that the word of God, although known to be his word, is not entitled to credit, unless it be supported by independent proof. The sole province of reason is to examine the evidence exhibited to shew that it is his word, and to investigate its meaning by the rules which are used in determining the sense of any other book. These preliminaries being settled, the state of mind which a revelation demands is faith, implicit faith, to the exclusion of doubts and objections; the subjection of our understandings to the authority of God, entire submission to the dictates of infinite wisdom. The reason is, that his testimony supplies the place of all other evidence. Our senses are here of no service, because the subjects revealed are past and future, invisible and spiritual. Our reason furnishes no data from which they can be deduced, because they belong to a supernatural order of things, which mere reason was not intended to contemplate. But if human testimony convinces us of the truth of many things, which we have not seen, and have no means of proving, the testimony of God is the ground of the highest assurance. There may be doctrines in revelation which are new and strange, which we in vain attempt to comprehend, which are at variance with our previous conceptions, and the common notions of mankind. But the difficulty which we feel in assenting to such doctrines, should yield to the reflection, that they are attested by Him whose understanding is infinite, while ours is bounded by very narrow limits; and that they relate to subjects, of which a small portion of humility might make us sensible that we are not competent judges; his nature, and counsels, and dispensa-

tions. On attentively perusing the Scriptures, we find, that although they consist of many books, which were composed in different ages and by persons of different habits and tempers, they harmonise in their views and statements, and no real contradiction has been discovered. We find also that the historical parts of them are confirmed by other authentic records, and that the doctrines and precepts, as far as we are able to judge, are agreeable to the purest dictates of reason. Having these evidences of their truth, we are bound in reason to believe, that those articles which are mysterious and incomprehensible, are equally true, and appear such to beings of superior understanding. Candour would require, that if a book were distinguished by the justness of its sentiments and the accuracy of its details so far as we could read it, we should believe that it maintained the same character throughout, although the remaining portions of its contents were written in a language which we did not understand, or were so obliterated that we could not fully make out the sense of the Author. Nothing is more equitable in such a case, than to judge of what is unknown from what we do know. The ascertained truth of some parts of Scripture, is a voucher for the truth of other parts, which we have been prevented from subjecting to the same test. At the same time, this is only a subsidiary argument; and we should remember that we have the highest evidence for the truth of every part, in the testimony of God himself. The whole proceeds from the same source; and the most exact and learned inquiries have terminated in establishing their entire credibility, and demonstrating that the Bible is the only book on which we can depend for information respecting the nature and government of God, the conduct which we should pursue, and the hopes which we may entertain. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." *

Besides those declarations by which knowledge is com-

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. Ps. xii. 6.

municated, there are engagements with men into which God has entered by pledging his word for good or evil, according to their conduct. His truth in relation to these is properly called faithfulness, and comes to be considered in the second place. The obvious division of them is into promises and threatenings.

God is faithful in his promises. They are expressive of an intention to bestow the blessings exhibited, and will be performed to those who have a claim to them: "Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it." To prevent misapprehension and to obviate objections, it is necessary to remark that the promises are distinguishable into two classes, absolute and conditional. An absolute promise is one, the performance of which is suspended upon no condition, and is to be expected solely from the faithfulness of the promiser. It is significant of God's determinate purpose to bestow some blessing, or to bring to pass some event pregnant with good. The failure of such a promise would imply a direct violation of truth: "But God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"* Of this nature was the promise of a Saviour, which flowed from his sovereign love, and did not depend upon the conduct of men. It was therefore performed at the appointed season, although the nations of the world had for ages provoked him by their idolatry and their other crimes, and among the Jews faith could hardly be found when the Messiah appeared. Of this nature too, was the promise to him of a spiritual seed, in consequence of which those who are dead in trespasses and sins are quickened by the Divine Spirit, who begins to operate upon them when they are unworthy of his care, and instead of soliciting his agency, are disposed to resist it. Other promises are conditional; I mean that they suppose some action or course of action as necessarily preceding the performance, some previous state of mind in the person upon whom the blessing is to be bestowed. The promise of salvation is not made to all who hear the gospel, but to those alone who believe it. There is a difference between the publication and the making

* Numb. xxiii. 19.

of a promise. The publication simply and generally announces the fact that there is such a promise ; the making of it respects individuals, and declares that upon them the promised good will be bestowed. The promise of salvation is published to all, but the persons to whom it is made are specified in the following words, " He that believeth shall be saved."* From zeal for the doctrine of free grace, some have been betrayed into the mistake of representing the promises in general as absolute, and have not attended to the difficulty in which they involve themselves. If their view of the promises were correct, every man to whom they are addressed, would have a claim to salvation, as a promise of pardon to all the criminals in a kingdom would entitle them all to life and liberty. It is idle to say, that they will all be saved if they believe ; for this is to retract what has been affirmed, or rather is to maintain a self-contradictory proposition, that the promise is at once absolute and conditional. If God had promised to save all men, without specifying any condition, or term, or qualification, or previous state of mind, his faithfulness would require that they should be all saved without a single exception. But a conditional promise may not be performed without any impeachment of his truth, since the cause of its non-performance is not a failure on his part, but on the part of men. The Israelites who came out of Egypt, were not admitted into the land of Canaan, into which God had promised to conduct them. Had he changed his intention ? Had he recalled his word ? No ; but they had proved a disobedient and ungrateful race, and so had forfeited all claim to the inheritance. " After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years ; and ye shall know my breach of promise."† An apostle referring to this case says, " We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."‡

Examples of the faithfulness of God in performing his promises, are frequent in the history of the saints. They are recorded in Scripture for his honour, and as an encouragement

* Mark xvi. 16.

† Numb. xiv. 34.

‡ Heb. iii. 19. iv. 1.

to faith. We see him fulfilling his word at the appointed time. The promise of the Messiah was made immediately after the fall, and was renewed on different occasions; but there was an interval of four thousand years before the seed of the woman appeared to bruise the head of the serpent. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* The descendants of Abraham were long strangers in Canaan and slaves in Egypt; but the promise by which they had been sustained did not fail, and the prefixed time of their deliverance was punctually observed. "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt."† These instances enforce the exhortation, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."‡ We see, besides, in the history of the saints, the Almighty fulfilling his word when obstacles insurmountable by human power and wisdom stood in the way, and realizing the hopes of his people when all circumstances seemed to justify despair. The case of Abraham furnishes a striking illustration. A son was promised to him by Sarah, who was barren; but the time passed on till both had arrived at such an age, that according to the laws of nature there could be no hope of posterity; and when Isaac was born, Sarah was ninety, and Abraham was a hundred years old. The stedfast faith of the patriarch while there was not a single thing to encourage him, and what was improbable at first had become physically impossible, was truly wonderful, and is mentioned in the Scriptures in the highest terms of commendation: "He was strong in faith, giving glory to God."§ Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away. If ordinary means will not suffice, miracles will be wrought that his declared purpose may be accomplished. We may therefore confidently expect, that his other promises respecting the Church, and the interests of the individual members of it in this world and the next, will be

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

† Exod. xii. 41.

‡ Hab. ii. 3.

§ Rom. iv. 20.

performed with the same punctuality, and that "there shall not fail one good word of all that the Lord our God hath spoken."

Again, God is faithful in his threatenings, or his denunciations of evil against the transgressors of his law. His faithfulness in respect of these implies these two things; his intention to inflict the evil denounced, and the actual infliction of it if no just cause occur to prevent it. The same distinction, however, is necessary, which we made when speaking of the promises. These threatenings must be considered as absolute or conditional; as absolute, when they express the unalterable purpose of God to punish the guilty; as conditional, when they express his purpose to punish hypothetically, or on the supposition of continued disobedience and final impenitence. Of the former, we have examples in the case of the rebellious Israelites, who were doomed to perish in the wilderness; in the case of the Amalekites, concerning whom the Most High declared with an oath, that he would utterly put out their remembrance from under heaven; and in the case of the antichristian Church, which is irremediably devoted to destruction. In none of these cases was room left for repentance on the part of God, or of the objects of his wrath. An example of conditional threatening is found in the history of Nineveh. When Jonah proclaimed in its streets, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," no condition was expressed; but it appears from the event to have been implied, that the doom of the city would be suspended by the repentance of the inhabitants. God himself has taught us to account upon the same principle for other threatenings which are not executed. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."* To the same class of threatenings belong those which are directed against sinners living under the dispensation of the gospel. It is evident that they are only conditional declarations of God's intention to punish them; for the guilty are provided with the means of

* Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

escape, and many through faith in Christ obtain the pardon of their sins. Hence, although it is certain that every sin deserves eternal condemnation, the final perdition of the hearers of the gospel is ascribed to unbelief, because it is a rejection of the offer of mercy. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him."* But although the faithfulness of God does not require the execution of his threatenings when a change has taken place in the character and conduct of men, it does require that they should be executed when circumstances continue the same. His denunciations are not vain terrors, intended to keep us in awe, but which a man of courage may disregard with impunity. The day of retribution will demonstrate how presumptuous are the hopes of the guilty; and their state in the world to come will be a solemn and impressive testimony to all intelligent creatures, that the judgments of the Lord are righteous and true. "When he that heareth the words of this curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."†

Some maintain that God ought to perform his promises, because they have created an expectation, and conferred a right to the blessings promised; but that there is no obligation to execute his threatenings, because no injury will ensue, but on the contrary an unspeakable advantage. There is, however, a fallacy in this argument. It supposes that there is no moral good in truth itself, nothing in its nature to make it sacred and inviolable, and that the obligation to respect it is resolved into utility. It confounds two things closely allied, yet perfectly distinct, truth and justice; and represents a person as bound to fulfil his word, not because he has pledged it, but because others have acquired a right from his engagement, like that of a creditor to the payment of a debt. But as men ought to speak truth for its own sake, and without

* John iii. 36.

† Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

any respect to the consequences, which can be considered only as motives to what was previously a duty, so God is led by his nature to speak truth, and to redeem every pledge which he has given, not so much for the sake of his creatures, as from a regard to himself. It is not because men have obtained a conventional right to certain blessings that he will bestow them, but because he will not deny himself; and for the same reason, he will not fail to give effect to his denunciations of evil. The design of this reasoning is to make it probable, that notwithstanding the explicit declaration of his purpose to punish transgressors, he may relent, and suffer them to escape with some temporary correction; but, besides that the reasoning is founded on a false principle, it forgets that the threatenings originated in the justice of God, and consequently, that not to execute these would be inconsistent with his essential rectitude as well as with his veracity. If truth were a matter of expedience, it might yield to occasion and circumstances, but its character is immutability, and it will maintain its honour in the treatment of both sinners and saints.

Lastly, God is sincere in the admonitions which he addresses to men, in his expostulations, his intreaties, and his invitations. We find him remonstrating with them for their folly and wickedness, warning them of the consequences of sin, and beseeching them to embrace the offers of salvation. Have we any reason to suspect that he is not in earnest? Why should we not give the same credit to him, which we should give to a person of known integrity and benevolence, who spoke to us in affectionate terms, and expressed great solicitude for our welfare? It is objected to his sincerity in this case, that he addresses himself to persons who, he knows beforehand, will pay no regard to his words, who are in fact incapable of attending to them, because they are in a state of moral insensibility and death, and to whom he will not give his effectual grace, to awaken them to serious consideration. Why does he dissuade them, it is asked, from that which will certainly take place, and express a desire for the salvation of those whom it is not his intention to save? It cannot be denied, that this is a difficulty of which we should endeavour, if possible, to obtain a solution, for the glory of God as well

as for our own satisfaction. Let it be observed, that the calls, invitations, and intreaties of Scripture may be considered as so many notices of our duty, as intimations to sinners that it is incumbent upon them to return to God by repentance, to believe the revelation of his grace, and to engage in the work of their salvation. As it will not be denied that this is our duty, so it cannot be doubted that God may enforce it in whatever manner his wisdom judges to be best, although he knows that we will not comply, because his right to command does not depend upon our disposition or our actual ability to obey, but upon the relation in which we stand to him as his creatures and subjects. Again, the counsels and exhortations of Scripture may be considered as declarations of what is agreeable to him, and in this view cannot be suspected of insincerity, with whatever earnestness they are expressed. The obedience of all men would be pleasing to God, who necessarily loves holiness and hates sin. Their happiness would be as pleasing to him as their holiness, because he is a benevolent Being, and cannot will their misery abstractly considered, or under the notion of an ultimate end. He has sworn by his life, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should turn to him and live.* If he does subject many of them to death, he is compelled to this severity for the honour of his government, as a good ruler among men, who desires the welfare of all under his authority, is compelled to punish the breakers of the law. In a word, the design of those parts of Scripture may be to render sinners inexcusable, to show that their perdition is imputable to themselves alone. They cannot plead that they were destitute of the means of knowing their duty, that their attention was not called to it, and that motives of sufficient efficacy were not employed to excite them. It will appear that the fault was in themselves. Their own perverseness frustrated the methods which were used for their good. They were so eagerly bent upon sin, that no obstacles could stop them. God had done much to restrain them, and more than he was under any obligation to do.

It may be said that these observations do not meet the

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

difficulty directly, and are applicable only to a partial view of it. It is not denied, that in any way which he chooses God may remind men of their duty, that their obedience would be pleasing to him, and that admonitions and reproofs render the impenitent inexcusable ; but the perplexing question remains unanswered, How is the use of means for saving men consistent with a previous decree to exclude them from salvation ? I am not aware that the question admits of an answer perfectly satisfactory. And what is the reason ? Is it any real opposition between the decree of God, and the call of the gospel ? or, in other words, is it a fact that God is insincere ? No ; the cause is our ignorance of the true nature and relation of the things which are to be reconciled. We know little about the decrees of God, much less than we are apt to imagine ; and when they are the subject of discussion, we reason in the dark. But we understand what the Scriptures say respecting our duty, and the offer of salvation. Let us be content with this knowledge, which is all that is necessary for practice, and permit no speculation upon a subject beyond our comprehension to interfere with our belief of the Divine veracity, which is the only foundation of our faith and hope. We have full proof of it in all other cases ; and it is surely reasonable to believe, that nothing hinders us from distinctly perceiving it in this case, but our own limited views. Let it be remembered, that whether we hold absolute or conditional decrees, the difficulty is the same, it being as impossible for the Arminian to reconcile the external call of the word with certain foreknowledge, as it is for the Calvinist to demonstrate its harmony with an independent and immutable purpose.

None of those reasons which lead men to deviate from truth, can have any influence upon God.

Men sometimes speak what is not agreeable to truth from ignorance, and misconception of the subject of discourse. It is unnecessary to state that a Being, whose knowledge is infinite, is liable to no misapprehension.

Men often tell lies for convenience, supplying by this expedient their want of power, or of other means to accomplish their purposes. Omnipotence stands in no need of stratagems, but goes straight forward to its end ; it has the command of

all means which wisdom may deem it fit to employ, and it can always effect its designs without them. It sometimes happens that men do not perform their promises from pure inability; they want the power which they possessed when they made them, or had a reasonable prospect of possessing. But there are no real obstacles to the performance of his promises; they are obstacles only in our apprehension. "He quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things which be not as though they were." "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?" *

Men sometimes deceive others from malignity, that they may be amused with their errors, and derive an infernal pleasure from the disappointment of their hopes. God has his creatures at absolute command, and could entangle them in a snare from which their own sagacity could not extricate them. He could confound their faculties, make them mistake imaginations for realities, and pronounce good to be evil, and evil to be good; but he will not employ his power for such purposes, although he may, for the just punishment of those who receive not the truth in the love of it, deliver them up to strong delusion to believe a lie. He is not, however, the author of such delusions, which originate in their own minds, or in the artful representations of other wicked beings. Men would not be deceived if they would commit themselves to his direction, and attend to the instructions he has given in his word.

Men sometimes deceive others from fickleness of disposition. Sincere when they make promises, they change their intentions; and the expectations which were founded on the presumption of their steadiness are not realized. Immutability is an attribute of God, immutability of counsel as well as of nature. No new object or circumstance can occur to him; but every thing which will exist at the time when the promise is to be performed, was foreseen at the time when it was made. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." ‡ He will be of the same mind to-morrow as he is to-day; for "he is in one mind, and who can

* Rom. iv. 17. Isa. xl. 28.

‡ Acts xv. 18.

turn him?"* The promises which were recorded in the Scriptures hundreds and thousands of years ago, are as sure a foundation of faith and hope as they were at the moment when they were first published to the world.

No man, I presume, who believes that there is a God, will suppose him to be capable of falsehood and insincerity ; and if objections are made, they can arise solely from certain statements of his proceedings in the Scriptures. Some of these have been anticipated and answered. If the supposed contradictions in the Scriptures should be objected, it would require more time than can be at present afforded, to shew how they are reconciled ; and it is sufficient to observe, that if the contradictions were real, they would prove, not that God is without veracity, but that the writings in which they are found falsely pretend to be a Divine revelation. But on the supposition that the Scriptures were dictated by his Spirit, it may be asked, what is to be made of particular passages ? We hear the prophet Jeremiah saying, " O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived : thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."† Admitting the translation to be right, we may consider the words as the exclamation of a good man in a moment of weakness, who has met with unexpected trials, and had hastily presumed that God would preserve him from them. He complains of being deceived, because his groundless expectations were disappointed. But the words may be rendered, " thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded ;" for this is, in other places, the sense of the original term פתה ; and then the meaning is, that God had irresistibly impelled him to perform the duties of his office, by which he had brought upon himself reproach and violence—had impelled him contrary to his own resolution to desist. Accordingly he adds, " Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name : but his word was in my heart as a burning fire in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I would not stay."‡ By another prophet, God is represented as sending a lying spirit to be in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, and as saying, " Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also : go forth and do so." || But Micaiah is re-

* Job xxiii. 13. † Jer. xx. 7. ‡ Ibid. 9. || 1 Kings xxii. 22.

lating a vision, in the interpretation of which every part of the description is not to be literally understood, and the general design is alone to be considered. God is often said to do what he only permits to be done. It is evident that nothing more was intended than to admonish Ahab that his prophets, who encouraged him to go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, were deceiving him with the promise of victory; and this admonition so plainly expressed, this notice beforehand, is a proof that God had no immediate concern in deceiving him. As God is said to have directed the Israelites to borrow jewels from the Egyptians, which were not to be returned, and borrowing implies a promise to restore, it may seem that he authorised deceit in this instance. But the difficulty arises from a mistranslation, for the word *בָּשַׁב*, rendered to *borrow*, signifies simply *to ask*. He merely directed the Israelites to ask these things from the Egyptians, and disposed the latter to comply with their request by his secret influence upon their minds, as Moses informs us in these words: "And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required, and they spoiled the Egyptians."* The only question which arises out of this case, relates to the justice of the transaction; and of this there will be no doubt, if we reflect that all human property being the gift of God, he may transfer it from one to another according to his pleasure, in the ordinary course of affairs, or by a miraculous interference; and that, when the Israelites were enriched at the expense of the Egyptians, they only recovered the wages of the long and laborious services which they had performed for the benefit of that people, and of which the due recompence had been hitherto withheld. It was right that they should be put in possession of a part of the wealth which their industry had so eminently contributed to produce; and if more fell to their share than was strictly due, the Egyptians were compelled to atone in this manner for their injustice.

* Exod. xiii. 36.

LECTURE XXVII.

ON GOD.

HIS HOLINESS.—MEANING OF THIS TERM IN SCRIPTURE.—DEFINITION OF HOLINESS.—INSTANCES OF ITS DISPLAY IN GOD'S WORKS AND DISPENSATIONS.—GENERAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRECEDING REVIEW OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, ON THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY, ALL-SUFFICIENCY, AND SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

IN Scripture, holiness is often attributed to God ; and there are some peculiarities attending it, of which it will be proper to take notice in the introductory part of this lecture. He is said to be glorious in holiness, as if it constituted the distinguished excellence of his nature, and diffused a lustre over his other perfections. He swears by his holiness, and thus holds it out as the inviolable pledge for the truth of his promises, the most complete security that they shall be punctually performed. It is brought forward to enforce his commands, to guard his institutions against profanation and pollution, and to excite us to a watchful care of our thoughts, and words, and actions. It is represented as impressed upon all his works and dispensations, which are thus rendered both amiable and venerable. It was singled out as the subject of praise by the seraphim who surrounded the throne of Jehovah, when he appeared in the temple to the prophet Isaiah ; and its solemn effect upon them and upon him, is too memorable to be passed over in silence. “ In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim : each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And

one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”*

The terms *holy* and *holiness* bear a variety of senses in Scripture, which it is not necessary at present to enumerate. There is one sense which is worthy of attention, because it frequently occurs. When applied to God, holy seems to signify august and venerable; and this is the meaning in more cases than we are apt to suppose, perhaps not much seldomer than it denotes purity, which is the idea commonly attached to it. I know not whether the passage quoted above may be considered as an example, but Jehovah appears to be pronounced thrice holy, because he was seated upon a lofty throne, was attended by the noblest creatures in the universe as his ministers, and his glory was displayed in every region of the earth. When the Psalmist pronounces his name to be “holy and reverend,”† the second epithet may be understood to be explanatory of the first; and when he says, that “his holy arm hath gotten him the victory,”‡ there is no direct reference to moral excellence, but to majestic force, to irresistible power. The command to “sanctify the Lord,” is a command to treat him with all the reverence which is due to his transcendent greatness, and is thus explained by Isaiah: “Sanctify the Lord God of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”|| He is a Being separated or distinguished from all other beings by his infinite excellence, as sacred things are separated from such as were common; possessed of every perfection intellectual and moral, in the highest possible degree, and therefore entitled to the most profound veneration of angels and men. His name should never be mentioned but with awe; and our whole conduct should testify that we are deeply sensible of his presence, and that there is nothing which we are so anxious to obtain as his favour, nothing which we so much dread as his displeasure.

* Is. vi. 1—5.

† Ps. cxi. 9.

‡ Ps. xcvi. 1.

|| Is. viii. 13.

While the holiness of God does certainly suggest, in many instances, the idea of greatness or majesty, which is an object of fear rather than love, it is not less certain that it is expressive, in other instances, of the purity of his nature. This is obviously the meaning of the concrete term in the following passage: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."* There would be no force in the exhortation, if the holiness ascribed to God were not of the same nature with that required from us, for the one is referred to as the reason and the pattern of the other. Hence, when we call God holy, we mean that there are in his nature certain moral qualities or principles, analogous to those on account of which men are pronounced to be virtuous or holy; that he is perfectly pure, free from the slightest taint of pollution; that his will is always conformable to the rectitude of his nature, so that sin is the invariable object of his hatred, and righteousness the invariable object of his approbation. His holiness has been defined to be "that virtue or perfection, by which he wills and approves whatever is conformable to his essence and perfections, and disapproves and rejects whatever is contrary; or that perfection which determines him to do nothing which is not worthy of himself, and to suffer nothing in his creatures which has not the same character, that is, to prevent it by his grace, or to punish it by his justice."

The holiness of God is commonly represented as a perfection as distinct from the other properties of his nature as wisdom, power, and immutability are from each other. But this I apprehend is a mistake, and has led to the use of words without any precise idea annexed to them. Holiness is a complex term, which does not express a particular attribute, but the general character of God as resulting from his moral attributes. The holiness of a man is not a distinct quality from his virtuous dispositions, but signifies the state of his mind and heart as influenced by these. When we proceed to analyse his holiness, or to shew in what it consists, we say that he is a devout man, a man of integrity, a man of humanity, a man

* 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

faithful to his engagements, and conscientious in all his relative duties; a man who abhors sin, and abstains from the very appearance of it. The holiness of God is not, and cannot be, something different from the moral excellencies of his nature which were formerly illustrated, but is the general term under which these particulars are comprehended. To call God holy, is to affirm, that he renders to his creatures their due, and governs them by laws adapted to their nature and relations; that he is full of benevolence, and takes pleasure in communicating happiness to the proper objects of his goodness; that he deals sincerely with them, and never amuses them with fallacious hopes, nor terrifies them with imaginary fears. As a just Being, he abhors fraud, robbery, oppression, every infraction of the rights of one man by another, and every attempt to deprive him of his due; as a good Being, he abhors selfishness, hard-heartedness, malignity, cruelty, and all the thoughts, and words, and deeds, which are contrary to charity; as a God of truth, he abhors falsehood, perjury, treachery, calumny, and in short, every species of deceit. As a holy Being, he loves every thing which is conformable to his law, and hates every thing which is contrary to it. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."* His nature is pure as that fluid when it issues from its source. Sin is as offensive to him as a disgusting taste is to our palate, or a loathsome object is to our eye. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and he cannot look upon iniquity."†

Reflection will convince us, that this view of the holiness of God is correct. It may be objected, that it is sometimes distinguished from the moral perfections of which it has been said to be the sum. In particular it is distinguished from justice in the following words: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."‡ But those who have attended to the nature of Hebrew poetry, know that it consists of parallelisms, or corresponding lines, of which the second, in many cases, conveys the same idea with the first, but in terms somewhat varied. Hence the righteousness or justice of God in the first part of this sentence, is his holiness in the second; and the only difference is, that in the latter a

* 1 John i. 5.

† Hab. i. 13.

‡ Ps. cxlv. 17.

more general term is employed. We cannot go over all the passages in which these terms occur ; but it would not be difficult to shew, that the distinction between them is that between a part and the whole. Holiness, then, is the general name for the moral excellence of the Divine nature ; and for this reason, I have deferred the consideration of it till I had illustrated its constituent parts, justice, goodness, and truth. Whatever may be resolved into these principles God loves and requires ; whatever is contrary to them he hates and forbids. Holiness in men and angels is agreeable to him ; between his nature and sin there is an eternal repugnance.

The holiness of God is manifested in his works and dispensations.

It was displayed in the formation of man. He was not only made a living soul, and endowed with intellectual powers, but there was impressed upon him the image of his Maker, consisting in the perfect rectitude of his mind, in the order and harmony of his faculties, in pure and heavenly affections. The ray is bright as the sun from which it emanates ; and man, when he came from the hands of his Creator, was resplendent with the glory of his moral excellence. There was not any weakness in his constitution, any irregularity of desire, any proneness to sin, as some blasphemers of the works of God have affirmed. His appetites were not at war with reason, and struggling to get free from the restraints which it imposed : there was a law in his mind, to which all his internal and external movements were conformable. “ God made man upright.” * The state in which he found himself at his creation, he might have retained. His moral ability was sufficient for all his purposes. He might be tempted, but there was no principle within him which could co-operate with temptation, and facilitate its success ; and when he was actually exposed to a trial, his Maker did not abandon him, but upheld in their integrity those powers which fitted him for resistance, and by the due exercise of which he would have triumphed. To suppose that his power was not adequate to his circumstances, or that it was withdrawn or impaired, would be to make God the author of sin. The fall of man was not

* Eccl. vii. 29.

owing to the want of any thing which God ought to have done for him. He yielded to solicitation, not because his understanding was not sufficiently acute to detect the sophistry of his adversary, or because the sensitive part of his nature was too strong for the rational. His compliance in either of these cases would have been necessary, and therefore not culpable. He yielded because he attended to the temptation alone, and disregarded the considerations which would have counteracted its influence. Man was less than nothing in comparison of God; but he was a point which reflected a beam of the sun, a diamond resplendent with light. Hence he was the crown and glory of this lower world, as angels were of the superior regions. When God had finished his works, they were all perfect, all worthy of their author, and he pronounced them to be good. Sin was known only as a possible evil, which might enter and mar their beauty.

Let us take a view of the law which was given to man at his creation, and we shall be furnished with an additional manifestation of the holiness of God. Its design was to retain him in a state of purity and innocence, by the proposal of such considerations as were calculated to operate upon his rational nature. While it impressed him with a sense of duty, it stimulated him to obedience by the prospect of reward, and opposed to the temptations which might assail him the fear of punishment. In the placing of man under a law, thus strengthened by promises and threatenings, we see a proof both of God's care of him, and of his regard to holiness, the interests of which he took measures at this early period to promote; for the law, in the language of Theology, was con-created with man; that is, the knowledge of it was communicated to his mind, and a sense of its authority was impressed upon his heart, in the first moment of his existence. He was not suffered to live for a day or an hour without a moral rule; and the first exercise of his faculties was an act of obedience. The holiness of God appears not only in the general design of the law, but also in the nature of its precepts. It is not a code of arbitrary prescriptions, which require minute and cautious attention, but do not improve the heart; it is not a system accommodated to the wishes and inclinations of man, and

compensating slight restraints by general indulgence; it is a strict, unvarying rule, enjoining the observance of every thing true, and just, and lovely, and of good report. Its tendency is to produce in us, according to our measure, the same moral excellence which is the glory of our Maker. It is a representation of the holiness of his nature; and when impressed upon the soul, stamps it with his image. He who loves and obeys this law, is an imitator of God.

The purity of the law appears from its forbidding sin in all its modifications, in its most refined as well as in its grossest forms; the taint of the mind, as well as the pollution of the body; the secret approbation of sin, as well as the external act; the transient look of desire, the almost unperceived irregular emotion. While it commands us to place a guard upon the avenues by which temptation might enter, it enjoins the strictest care of the heart; and calls upon us to destroy the seed before it has grown. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy.”* Such it has been shewn to be by our Saviour, who came not to promulgate a new law milder and more adapted to the infirmity of human nature, but to free the old and unalterable law from the loose interpretations of corrupt men, who were the professed teachers of religion. He has taught us that nothing less will satisfy its demands than perfect purity; and that in vain do we wash the outside of the cup, if within it be full of uncleanness. This is the law which God has given to mankind. It informs us what he is, and what we ought to be that we may please him. “The statutes of the Lord are right; the commandment of the Lord is pure; the fear of the Lord is clean; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping them there is a great reward.”†

If we direct our attention to the dispensations of providence, we shall see farther proofs of the holiness of God, in the moral government which he exercises over mankind, and the means which he employs to maintain the authority of his law. It may be remarked, in the first place, that amidst the ruin of our moral nature by the fall, there remain some fragments

* Rom. vii. 12.

† Ps. xix. 8—11.

of his image; or at least, that conscience continues to lift its voice in favour of the righteousness and goodness of his law, calls men to the performance of their duty, and punishes their sins by remorse and fear. The operations of this faculty, both when it excites him to the cultivation of holiness, and when it renders him uneasy for not obeying its admonitions, are an evidence that man was created a holy being, as the faculty of reason proves that his nature was originally intelligent. I may mention, in the second place, the means which have been employed to give more extensive and commanding authority to conscience. Such were the precepts of morality which were transmitted from age to age by tradition, or which thoughtful and contemplative men in the heathen world discovered, and which with all their imperfections, served in some degree to set bounds to the prevalence of vice. We add, that from time to time God raised up among his favourite people, holy men and prophets who republished his neglected and almost forgotten law, in a manner fitted to arrest the attention of the most inconsiderate, denounced his judgments upon the profane and wicked, and enforced obedience by strong and urgent motives. It is of some importance to take notice, in the next place, of the natural checks which he has placed upon sin, and the natural encouragements which he has held out to the practice of our duty; for in these we clearly perceive his regard to the interests of holiness. As he is the Author of nature, of the human constitution, and of the state of the world, in which chance has no place, but all events are ordered by his wisdom, we believe that the system of things is subservient to his designs. Now we find, that men cannot commit sin without experiencing internal uneasiness, exposing themselves to reproach and danger, injuring their health, and in some cases involving themselves in temporal ruin. Consequences of an opposite nature result from the performance of duty: they enjoy peace of mind, are loved and honoured, and receive the reward of industry and temperance in health and competence, and in a tranquil old age. In what light can we view this natural order of things, but as a declaration by the Author of nature, that virtue is pleasing, and vice is displeasing to him; that he is the friend of righteousness and the

enemy of sin ? We may collect his intentions from his works as well as from revelation, and ought confidently to conclude that holiness is the object of his approbation, when we find good connected with the practice, and evil with the neglect of it, in the course of his providence. In a word, the dispensations in which his justice has been revealed, are also manifestations of his holiness, of his infinite abhorrence of sin. Why has he acted, as if his own works were so offensive, that he could not bear to look upon them, and he delighted in destroying what it once gave him pleasure to create ? Why did he overwhelm the former earth with the waters of the deluge ? Why did he consume cities with a shower of fire and brimstone from the clouds ? Why has he called for famine and pestilence to sweep away the human race by thousands ? Why does he command the sword to come out of its scabbard, and bathe itself in the blood of the slain ? What meaneth the heat of this great anger ? The cause is sin ; and the design is to remind us, that notwithstanding his usual patience, his detestation of it is undiminished, and will not permit him always to be silent ; that the notions which men entertain of him as an easy and indulgent Being are false, and that he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity.

The holiness of God shines with peculiar lustre in redemption. It has dispelled the cloud which sin had spread over the character of God, and revealed him in all his glory, as the moral Governor of the world. Let me remind you, that one design of this dispensation, was to shew us what human nature originally was, and what it must become, that it may be acceptable to God, and be admitted into his communion. With this view he sent his own Son into the world, in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without the slightest stain of depravity. Upon this man the image of God, with which Adam was adorned, was fully and distinctly impressed, so that all the virtues were exhibited in their highest perfection, and he is the great example to which other men are destined to be conformed. That which was conceived in the womb of the virgin was “ a holy thing.” The holiness of God was displayed in the public approbation of our Saviour by a voice from heaven proclaiming that the Father was well pleased with him ;

for this testimony was borne to him because he was holy. But let us consider more particularly his death. The immediate design of it was to make atonement for sin ; but the ultimate design was the sanctification of men, their restoration to that state of purity from which they had fallen. The means were of the most wonderful and unexpected kind, the substitution, obedience, and sufferings of a divine person, the crucifixion of the Lord of glory ; and from them we judge of the importance of the end. We infer that holiness is infinitely acceptable to God, since he resorted to this extraordinary method of manifesting it to the universe, and re-establishing it in our world. “ He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* By satisfying justice, he removed the obstacle to the gracious exercise of Almighty power, for rectifying the disorder of our nature and restoring its primitive beauty. Let us trace the consequences of his death. A new scheme begins to be executed ; a new intercourse is opened between heaven and earth ; new means are employed ; a new agent commences his operations upon the soul. The Holy Ghost, who moved upon the dark abyss and impregnated it with the seeds of life, performs the nobler work of the second creation. Old things pass away, and all things become new. What is the aim of those convictions of sin which he awakens in the conscience, of the spiritual light which he causes to shine into the mind, of his mysterious influence upon the thoughts, and volitions, and feelings ; of the comforts with which he refreshes the soul ; of his admonitions, and counsels, and reproofs ; of his excitements to prayer, and vigilance, and activity ; what is the aim of these varied operations, but to produce a gradual assimilation to our Maker ; to refine us from moral pollution, that we may finally appear before him ; without spot or blemish ? He is the regenerating Spirit, and is conducting his plans with a view to the blessed consummation announced in these words of an Apostle : “ Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”† All the holiness which is found in our degenerate world, pro-

* Tit. ii. 14.

† 2 Peter iii. 13.

ceeds from his inspiration. He will not cease to exert his power till his work is finished ; and then man will be fair as in paradise, bright as the angels, and glorious even in the eyes of God himself. Redemption will terminate in the everlasting triumph of holiness. “ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” *

Lastly, It is a proof of the holiness of God, that he has made purity of heart an indispensable qualification for eternal happiness. His grace frees the believer from the guilt of sin ; but its pollution continues the object of his abhorrence, and must be removed that men may be admitted into fellowship with him. Hence they are partially sanctified in this world, and at death are made perfect in holiness. Nothing is more injurious to the character of God, than to suppose that the design of the mission of Christ was to repeal the moral law, or to relax the severity of its demands. He endured the curse, and abolished it in respect of believers, but he made no change in the precepts. Their obedience, although imperfect, is indeed acceptable to their heavenly Father ; but it is not because a higher degree is not required, but in consideration of the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer, upon which only their title to the divine favour is founded. But infinite as is his merit, and powerful as is his intercession, they avail not to any who continue in sin. He acknowledges none to be his disciples but those who do honour to him as their Lord : “ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” † The faith with which salvation is connected, is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the gospel, but associates the heart with the understanding, and diffusing a living influence over the powers of the soul, enlists them all in the service of God. Such also is the influence of hope, for he who is possessed of it, “ purifies himself even as Christ is pure.” It has no place in an unregenerated man : it is a counterfeit, a base imitation of it, with which those are amused who are attached to the

* Matt. xiii. 41—43.

† John xv. 14.

pleasures of the world. The beatific vision is promised only to the saints: "The pure in heart shall see God."* In this world there is a mixture of moral good and evil; but heaven, the region of light, is separated by an impassable gulf from the kingdom of darkness: the felicity of its inhabitants will result from their perfection, the order of their faculties, and their exercise upon the noblest objects; in the love of God, and the love of one another: "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."† There is no promiscuous admission into heaven; the society is select; the members are fitted for their place and their employment; and when the throne of God is surrounded by millions of angels who have kept their first estate, and of human beings who have been redeemed from corruption by the blood of his Son and the operation of his Spirit, he will once more rejoice in his works, and pronounce them to be good.

I have endeavoured to shew in what sense God is said to be holy, and have produced proofs that this excellence is justly attributed to him.

From this review of his perfections, it appears, that he is an incomprehensible Being; and lost in admiration of his infinite greatness, we are constrained to adopt the words of Zophar the Naamathite: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."‡ His existence we are able to demonstrate by arguments which carry full conviction to our minds; but the manner of it surpasses conception. All creatures had a beginning; but as he always will be, so he always has been. What do we know of a past eternal duration?

* Mat. v. 8.

† Rev. xxi. 27. xxii. 14, 15.

‡ Job xi. 7—9.

When we turn our thoughts to this subject, we are confounded. An eternal succession which is past, seems to us to be impossible ; and when we speak of an unsuccessive duration, we use words to which we can affix no distinct meaning. We believe that he is present in all places ; but we do not believe that his essence is extended, because it is immaterial. Here also our minds are overwhelmed. Presence without extension is inconceivable to us, and in our apprehension, imports the occupation of a certain portion of space. He is omniscient ; but while we readily assent to this proposition, we are beset with difficulties, and are utterly incapable of understanding how he can certainly foreknow events which are called contingent, or depend upon the free agency of men. He is almighty ; but we can form no idea of creating power,—power which produces something out of nothing. Mysteries present themselves when we are considering all his perfections, even those of which we find a resemblance in ourselves, because there is no proportion between finite and infinite.

The incomprehensibility of the divine nature is not a reason why we should desist from inquiry, and devote our whole attention to other subjects. It would surely be folly to say, ‘ We cannot acquire perfect knowledge, and we will therefore make no effort to attain it in any degree.’ Partial knowledge is beyond all doubt better than ignorance, and in the present case, is of infinite importance. There is no subject which we thoroughly understand. Our senses give us clear notions of external things, and we are conscious that there is a thinking active principle within us ; but we have no acquaintance with the essence of either matter or spirit. Yet, although we cannot tell what they are, the knowledge of their properties convinces us of their existence, and suffices for all practical purposes. Shall we say that God is not almighty and omniscient, because we cannot find out his power to perfection, and this knowledge is too wonderful for us ? Or shall we disbelieve the moral character of God, merely because difficulties occur to us respecting the existence of moral evil, and his concern in sinful actions ? Would it be justifiable to neglect and undervalue principles, of the truth of which we have the clearest and most satisfying evidence, and which are capable

of being improved to the most important practical purposes, solely because we do not comprehend them in their full extent, and in all their bearings?

But the incomprehensibility of the divine nature should teach us humility, caution, and reverence. When in the course of our investigations, we arrive at a conclusion which astonishes and confounds us, we ought not for this reason to reject it as illegitimate and false; and when revelation informs us of some fact which reason could not have discovered, and by which it is perplexed, it would ill become us to pronounce it to be impossible. It is confessed by all, that we have no knowledge of the essence of the Deity: on what ground then are some men so bold as to affirm, that there can be no distinction in it to which there is nothing analogous in created beings; that its unity is inconsistent with a plurality of persons? The same reflection should silence our objections against any of his perfections or dispensations. Let us not presume to apply our short line to immensity. "Surely," said Agur, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?"*

Between the knowledge of God in this life, and that which will be enjoyed in the state of vision, the difference is great; but as the former should not be undervalued because it is imperfect, the latter should not be magnified beyond the reality. Some Scholastic Doctors have maintained, that although our present knowledge is only apprehensive, as they call it, or partial; yet in the world to come, it will be comprehensive or perfect. It is indeed said, that then "we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known;" but to infer that we shall know God as fully as he knows us, is to be misled by the sound of words, and to disregard the restriction of the sense which the subject necessarily requires. The saints in heaven will see God with the eye of the mind, for

* Prov. xxx. 2—4.

he will be always invisible to the bodily eye ; will see him more clearly than they could see him by reason and faith, and more extensively than all his works and dispensations had hitherto revealed him ; but their minds will not be so enlarged as to be capable of contemplating at once, or in detail, the whole excellence of his nature. To comprehend infinite perfection, they must become infinite themselves. Even in heaven, their knowledge will be partial, and at the same time, their happiness will be complete, because their knowledge will be perfect in this sense, that it will be adequate to the capacity of the subject, although it will not exhaust the fulness of the object. We believe that it will be progressive, and that as their views expand, their blessedness will increase ; but it will never reach a limit, beyond which there is nothing to be discovered ; and when ages after ages have passed away, he will still be the incomprehensible God.

From the review of the perfections of God, it farther appears, that he is an all-sufficient Being ; and this implies, that he is all-sufficient to himself, and all-sufficient to his creatures.

He is all-sufficient to himself. As the first of Beings, he could receive nothing from another, nor be limited by the power of another. Being infinite, he is possessed of all possible perfection. When he existed alone, he was all to himself. His understanding, his love, his energies, found an adequate object in himself. Had he stood in need of any thing external, he could not have been independent, and therefore would not have been God. He created all things, and is said to have created them for himself ; but it was not that any defect might be supplied by them, but that he might communicate life and happiness to angels and men, and admit them to the contemplation of his glory. He demands the services of his intelligent creatures, whom he has endowed with powers which qualify them for the duties enjoined ; but he derives no benefit from their good offices, and all the advantage redounds to themselves. “ I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds.” “ If I were hungry, I would not tell thee ; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” With respect to moral duties, which have

a greater intrinsic value than sacrifices and gifts, hear how the Scripture speaks: "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?"* He expects glory from his creatures; but is he like a poor mortal, who lives upon the admiration and praise of his fellows? The glory which he requires, is merely the devout acknowledgment of the infinite excellencies which he possessed before there was an eye to behold them, or a tongue to speak of them; and what are the thanksgivings and adoration of ten thousand worlds to him, who pronounces them all to be vanity, and less than nothing? He makes use of instruments and means to accomplish his ends; not, however, from a deficiency of power, but in some cases, to display it more strikingly through the inadequacy of the means, and in all, to maintain the order of the created system, and the dependence which he has established of one thing upon another. He loves his creatures, but there is no mixture of selfishness in his love: he desires their happiness, but it is from benevolence, and not from any respect to his own. An infinitely perfect Being has all his resources in himself. Creatures can give him nothing, because all that they possess is already his; and they can take nothing from him whose existence is necessary and immutable.

God is all-sufficient to his creatures. They live in him, and move in him. His arm sustains, his goodness supplies, and his wisdom guides them. It is owing to his care that the universal system is upheld, and its laws continue to operate for the general good. All the happiness which is enjoyed by creatures of different kinds, emanates from his bounty. Happiness of the most common kind, the happiness which is experienced through the medium of the senses, is the fruit of his beneficence. He has created objects to delight the eye, the ear, the smell, and the taste; he gives a relish to life, and crowns it with abundant blessings. The all-sufficiency of God appears in the ample, and I may say, profuse distribution of good. All are furnished with the means of en-

* Job xxii. 2, 3.

joyment ; not even the meanest creature is neglected. And this bounty is never exhausted ; it is continued from day to day, and from year to year : when a new generation come forward, the store-house of Providence is as well replenished for them, as it was for their predecessors.

The all-sufficiency of God may be considered in relation to man, and to the better part of his nature, the soul. Its true happiness consists in the enjoyment of God. His favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. He is called the "portion of the soul," to intimate that the impressions of his love, the manifestations of his glory, are the chief objects of its desire, and the source of its highest satisfaction. Hence his favour is preferred by the saints to the choicest and most abundant earthly delights. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." * He who is possessed of this portion, has better reason than the philosopher who had made an important discovery in science, to exclaim in a transport of joy, 'I have found it, I have found it.' He has found that good, of which the wise men of ancient times talked and dreamed, but the nature of which they did not understand ; that good which the soul of man was created to enjoy, and for which it feels a thirst that all the waters of creation could not quench ; that good which is comprehensive of all good, with which no other is worthy to be compared, after which no other will be desired, and which will continue in every stage of our existence to impart joy ever full and ever new. So satisfied is he who has obtained it, that he envies no man, however prosperous, because he knows no man who has such reason to be happy as himself, but he who has been equally prudent in his choice. He never says to the worldly man, 'Oh that my condition were like thine, that I were rich, and crowned with honours as thou art !' but wishing him to share in his blessedness, which admits of being communicated without suffering diminution, he earnestly invites him to become a partaker : "O taste and see that the Lord is good." In the absence of external

* Ps. iv. 6, 7.

comforts, in poverty, affliction, and destitution, when no ray of earthly hope breaks the gloom, and all is lost that the heart once loved, and the world still prizes, he is inspired with triumphant joy by the thought of his interest in God : “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” * Although heaven and earth were annihilated, and nature presented a universal blank, the Christian would not be forlorn. He could say, while surrounded by the dreadful vacuity, ‘ My inheritance is entire. They have perished, but thou, O Lord, shalt endure ; they have vanished away, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee.’

The all-sufficiency of God secures the undecaying and never-ending felicity of the saints. An earthly portion is wasted by use ; and many a man who spent the former part of his days in abundance, suffers want in old age. Infinite perfection cannot be exhausted. Giving doth not impoverish it, and withholding doth not enrich it. If it be true that the saints will not be stationary in the world to come, their progress will be from good to better and better ; an expansion of their noblest faculties, and a perpetual accession of bliss. There is a fountain of living water in heaven, because God is there in the fulness of his love ; a fountain which sends forth its pure and refreshing stream unimpaired and uninterrupted in its course. “ The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” †

Lastly, From this review of his perfections, it appears that God is the Sovereign Lord of the universe. No dominion is

* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

† Is. lx. 19, 20.

so absolute as that which is founded on creation. He who might not have made any thing, had a right to make all things according to his own pleasure. In the exercise of his uncontrolled power, he has made some parts of the creation mere inanimate matter, of grosser or more refined texture, and distinguished by different qualities, but all inert and unconscious. He has given organization to other parts, and made them susceptible of growth and expansion, but still without life in the proper sense of the term. To others he has given not only organization, but conscious existence, organs of sense, and self-motive power. To these he has added in man the gift of reason, and an immortal spirit, by which he is allied to a higher order of beings who are placed in the superior regions. He might have created a world composed of different materials, and peopled it with beings different in form and in qualities. He might have bestowed upon man a less or a greater portion of intellect, and adapted his situation to the change. Over the world which he has created, he sways the sceptre of omnipotence. "I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation : and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing : and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ?" *

A creature, considered simply as such, has no rights. He can demand nothing from his Maker ; and in whatever manner he may be treated, has no title to complain. But in speaking of the dominion of God, we ought not to lose sight of his moral perfections. He is just and good, and will not subject his creatures to sufferings without a cause, and punish the innocent as if they were guilty. His own nature sets limits to the exercise of his power. We are under a moral Governor, who will do what is right. But within these limits, there is ample room for the exercise of sovereignty towards men in their present state of depravity. God may assign any condition to any individual. He may bestow good upon one, and inflict evil upon another. He may distribute good and evil

* Dan. iv. 34, 35.

in all different proportions. He may place one man in advantageous circumstances, and expose another to difficulties, temptations, and disappointments. He may make one a freeman and another a slave, one noble and another base, one rich and another poor, one healthy and another diseased. He may take away one in infancy, and permit another to live to old age. When we turn to the actual state of things, which is not the effect of chance, but of his over-ruling providence, we observe all these instances of sovereign disposal; and our objections are answered by the question, "Who art thou, O man! that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"*

I have endeavoured, in the preceding lectures, to demonstrate the existence, and to illustrate the perfections of God. Comparatively little has been said upon a subject so ample, and nothing suitable to its transcendent dignity. Who is worthy to declare the glory of God but himself? yet from the humble thoughts and grovelling language of a mortal, faintly attempting to portray infinitude, you may perceive, that of all beings God is the greatest, and the most wonderful; one of whom we should never think without the deepest awe, and whose approbation it should be the object of our most anxious solicitude to obtain. Wherever we are, this Being is present with us, whether we dwell in the city or in the wilderness; present at the midnight hour when we are shrouded in darkness, and in the secret place to which we have retired from human observation. As he is now a Witness, he will hereafter exercise the office of a Judge, and his sentence will be final and irresistible. He is an enemy more to be dreaded than hosts of men, and legions of devils: he is a friend in whose wisdom and power we shall have a sure resource amidst distresses and perplexities, and in all conditions an immoveable foundation of hope. He is the God of those who believe in his Son; their shield and their exceeding great reward. His infinite perfections are engaged on their side, and are working

* Rom. ix. 20, 21.

out their present and future good. Let us look up to him as reconciled through the atonement, and beseech him to regard us with a gracious eye. Let us commit ourselves to his merciful disposal during our transitory existence upon earth ; and when the hour of death comes, let us throw ourselves into the arms of his love.

Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, the only Wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ON THE TRINITY.

MEANING AND ORIGIN OF THE TERM, TRINITY.—TRACES OF THE DOCTRINE
AMONG THE HEATHENS.—EVIDENCES OF IT IN THE OLD AND NEW TES-
TAMENT.

GOD is the most wonderful of all beings ; and we have proceeded but a short way in our inquiries, when we are compelled, by the mysterious nature of the subject, to exclaim, “ Who can by searching find him out ? who can find out the Almighty to perfection ? ” There is some proportion between our conceptions of the most excellent creatures and the objects of thought, because, although exalted above us, they are still finite like ourselves ; but of Him who is uncreated, self-existent, and all-perfect, we can obtain only faint and partial glimpses. Of the imperfection of our knowledge, we must have been frequently convinced during the preceding review of the nature and character of our Maker ; and it may be, that in not a few instances, when our ideas appear to ourselves to be sublime, they are mean and grovelling in the estimation of such of our fellow-creatures as are possessed of superior understanding ; and that our reasonings are erroneous when we are most confident that they amount to demonstration. But we are now to enter upon a subject which, if we may speak of degrees where all is beyond the range of our faculties, is still more incomprehensible than any which has yet engaged our attention. The self-existence of God, his un-

derived, independent, necessary existence, undoubtedly baffles our utmost efforts to conceive it, because there is nothing analogous to it among creatures ; but we understand that he does exist, and the fact is established by arguments clear and satisfactory. Of some of his natural, and all his moral perfections, there is a faint resemblance in ourselves ; so that we do not use words without meaning when we speak of his power, his knowledge, his goodness, and his justice. We also understand our own words when we speak of his unity, and affirm, that there is one Being possessed of all possible perfection, and that there are not, and cannot be more than one. But the next step which we take under the conduct of revelation presents a mystery which astonishes reason, and upon which no exertion of intellect can throw a single ray of light. You remember the story of the philosopher, who being asked, what God is ? requested time to consider, and after repeated delays confessed, that the more he meditated the more he was perplexed. We are not surprised that he found it impossible to answer the question, when we reflect that he had no better guide than the light of nature, and besides was embarrassed by the vain and false speculations which abounded among his countrymen. Even revelation, although it has corrected many errors, has not solved all our doubts ; nor could it have been possible for any revelation to enable a finite to comprehend an infinite Being. It may even be said to have augmented the difficulty, by at least one discovery so new and strange, that reasoning is useless and presumptuous, and the doctrine can be received only by a humble faith. We are satisfied by the arguments for the unity of God, that there is only one Being who created the heavens and the earth, and is entitled to the religious homage of their inhabitants. But as soon as we open the Bible, a doctrine meets our eye which seems opposed to this primary truth ; for while our arguments for the unity are confirmed by its most express declarations, and polytheism is everywhere condemned, the true God himself is represented as, in some respect, more than one. This at least is the view which we take of many passages ; although great efforts have been made to put a different sense upon them. As these efforts shew that this is the apparent

sense, the sense which naturally occurs to the reader, for they would have been uncalled for if there had been nothing in the mode of expression which could be construed to imply plurality; so it is remarkable that in this light they have been regarded by the great majority of Christians, and the doctrine of the Trinity has been an article of faith in every age of the church. This single circumstance is a reason for inquiring into the subject. It is surely of some importance to ascertain whether so many wise, and learned, and holy men, who have maintained this doctrine, with the countless thousands of less distinguished individuals who have professed the same faith, were right or wrong in their conclusions. It is a higher consideration, that our conceptions of God should in all things be conformable to the notices which he has given of himself; that if the Scriptures associate in their account of him the ideas of unity and plurality, we are bound to admit the fact, however incapable we may be of understanding it; and that on the hypothesis of such an association, the notion of absolute unity, unity of person as well as of essence, is false, and the Being of whom it is predicated exists only in the imagination. If the Scriptures teach that there are three persons in the Divine Essence, and we believe that there is only one, our God and the God of revelation are not the same.

The doctrine which I am about to illustrate, is thus expressed in our Confession of Faith. "In the unity of the Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."* The sum of this definition is, that while there is only one Divine nature, there are three subsistences or persons, called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who possess not a similar, but the same numerical essence; and that the distinction between them is not merely nominal but real. The term which has been chosen to express this doctrine is *Trinity*, a compound Latin word, signifying *three in unity*. The Greeks use the word *τριας*, which serves the purpose;

* Westminster Confession, chap. ii. § 3.

although it does not so explicitly convey the idea of a three-fold distinction in unity, its proper meaning being *numerus ternarius* or *ternio*, the number three. Some think that the word Trinity was first used in a synod which met at Alexandria in the year 317 ; but others assign to it an earlier date, and give as the author Theophilus of Antioch, who flourished about the year 162. “ He was the first,” says the translator of Mosheim, “ who made use of the word Trinity, to express the distinction of what divines call persons in the Godhead. The Christian Church is very little obliged to him for his invention. The use of this and other unscriptural terms, to which men attach either no ideas or false ones, has wounded charity and peace, without promoting truth and knowledge. It has produced heresies of the very worst kind.” Reflections of this nature you will meet with in many books : they are apt to gain upon the unexperienced, by an apparent desire to guard the word of God against human corruptions, and to regulate our conceptions and expressions in religion solely by the unerring standard. But beware of being imposed upon. A little attention will convince you, that the principle, admitted in its full extent, would set aside all human explanations of Scripture ; and that the real objection is, not to the terms which have been invented to express certain doctrines clearly and concisely, but to the doctrines themselves. This is the true cause of the outcry against *τριάς*, *ὁμοουσιος*, and other words and phrases which have been employed in stating the articles of faith in opposition to heresies. Had Theophilus invented the doctrine in question, the indignation of this author would have been justifiable, and much stronger language might have been properly used in condemning him ; but the contrivance of a convenient term to express what we know to be a scriptural truth, was surely quite harmless, provided that the term was appropriate, and could excite displeasure only in the minds of men who were disaffected to the Trinity itself.

As the Trinity is confessedly a doctrine of revelation, all our arguments for it must be derived from the Scriptures. It is remarkable, however, that some traces of it are to be found among the heathens. These will not prove the doctrine

to be true; but they are curious, and if properly authenticated, will lead to the conclusion, that they had been conveyed to them by tradition, for we can account for them in no other way; and consequently, that the Trinity was a doctrine of the primeval religion. Zoroaster, the reformer of the Persian religion, is said to have taught that the first divine Agent created all things by his wisdom and love; "which names," it has been observed, "are so correspondent to the characters of the second and third persons of the Trinity exhibited in the Bible, that we cannot doubt but they must have been derived from some remains of Divine revelation, afforded to the patriarchs from the beginning." The Magi maintained that the Deity existed in a first, a second, and a third mind. "The first was super-essential in itself, and the principle of all essence; the second was the filial mind, generated by the first, the Creator of the material world; and the third was the efficient wisdom and power of the other two." The person called Thoth, Theuth, or Hermes Trismegistus, who was celebrated among the Egyptians as the author of their learning and arts, is said to have obtained his title of 'thrice greatest,' chiefly on account of his doctrine concerning the Deity. He held, we are informed, "that there were three principal powers, virtues, or forms in God, and that the name of the ineffable Creator implied one Deity." This was his name, "I am all that will be, is, and was;" and it is the same with Jehovah, which is explained in the New Testament by this periphrasis, "He that was, and is, and is to come." * Among the Romans, I know not whether we should suppose their three principal gods who ruled over all nature, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, and their triform images, to be vestiges of the primitive doctrine. They are so faint, and so remote from the truth, that it is hardly proper to mention them. There is one passage in the writings of Seneca, which is too remarkable to be passed over. "Believe me," he says, "this is done by him, whoever he was, that formed the universe, whether the Almighty God himself, or the incorporeal Reason," for so the Latins translated λογος, "which was the artificer of those vast operations," the ἐγμουργος of the Greeks, and the

* Rev. i. 8.

all-creating Word of the Christians, “or the Divine Spirit, diffused through the least as well as the greatest of all things.” *

It is unnecessary to enumerate all the semblances of this doctrine which have been pointed out in the creeds of different nations. The Cabiri or Mighty Ones of Sanchoniathon might be mentioned. They were three in number, and the name Cabiri is evidently of Hebrew origin. In the book of Job, God is called אל-כביר, *El-cabbir*, “the mighty God,” and Cabiri or Cabirim is the plural. I shall only add, what has chiefly engaged the attention of critics on this subject, the Platonic Trinity as taught by Plato himself, and more fully by his followers. These philosophers held that there were three principles in the Divine nature, the first το αγαθον, the second ὁ νοῦς or ὁ λογος, and the third ἡ ψυχη, corresponding to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These were all included in the το Θειον, or the Divine nature. Dr Priestley maintained, in his controversy with Dr Horsley, “that it was never imagined that the three component members of the Platonic Trinity, are either equal to each other, or strictly speaking, one.” To this his antagonist replied, “They are more strictly speaking, one, than any thing in nature of which unity may be predicated. No one of them can be supposed without the other two. The second and third being, the first is necessarily supposed; and the first (Αγαθον) being, the second and third (Νους and Ψυχη) must come forth. Concerning their equality, I will not say that the Platonists have spoken with the same accuracy which the Christian Fathers use; but they include the three principles in the Divine nature, in the το Θειον; and this notion implies the same equality which we maintain; at the same time I confess, that the circumstance of their equality was not always strictly adhered to by the younger Platonists.” †

* Senecæ Consolatio ad Helviam, 8. The whole passage is as follows: —“Id actum est, mihi crede, ab illo, quisquis formator universi fuit, sive ille Deus est potens omnium, sive incorporalis Ratio ingentium operum artifex, sive Divinus Spiritus per omnia maxima ac minima, æquali intentione diffusus, sive fatum et mutabilis causarum inter se cōhærentium congeries; id inquam, actum est,” &c.

† Job xxxvi. 5. ‡ Tracts in controversy with Priestley, p. 247, edit. 1812.

We can hardly doubt, that a notion prevailed in the heathen world, not only of a plurality of gods, for this was openly avowed, but of some distinction in the nature of him who was called the Supreme God, and of whom contemplative men entertained more sublime ideas than the vulgar. It is surprising that they should have in any degree approximated to the truth, that they should have obtained a glimpse of the subject; and we cannot wonder at their mistakes and inaccuracies, when we reflect upon their general ignorance relative to religion, and remember that all their knowledge was derived from tradition. The Trinity is, as we have said, a doctrine of pure revelation; it is a secret of the Divine Nature of which not a suspicion would have been entertained, if God had not been pleased to disclose it; it is not made manifest, like his existence, and wisdom, and goodness, by the works of creation and providence.

Our first step is to search the Scriptures, with a view to ascertain whether this doctrine is found in them. Let us begin with the Old Testament, in which we may expect to meet with some traces of it at least, if it should not be so clearly revealed as in the New.—Many have considered the plural names of God as an intimation of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. One of these names occurs in the first verse of the Bible. “In the beginning אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*,” literally the *Gods*, “created the heavens and the earth;” * and it is construed with a singular verb בָּרָא, *bara*. It would be endless to enumerate parallel passages; for in fact this name is rarely used in the singular, אֱלֹה, *Eloah*. It is plural throughout the whole first chapter of Genesis, where it is so often introduced, and in a thousand other places. The singular is not preferred, even when the design is to assert in the most solemn manner the unity of God: “Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH our Elohim, אֱלֹהֵינוּ, is one JEHOVAH.” † This is not the only name which assumes the plural form when it is applied to the Supreme Being. “Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him,” בָּעֲשֵׂיוֹ, *in his Makers*. ‡ “For thy Maker is thy husband,” בְּעֵלֶיךָ עֹשֶׂה, *thy Makers is thy husbands*. || “Remember thy Creator,” אֶת-בּוֹרְאֶיךָ, *thy Creators*, “in the days of thy youth.” §

* Gen. i. 1. † Deut. vi. 4. ‡ Ps. cxlix. 2. || Is. liv. 5. § Eccl. xii. 1

In places which it would be tedious to cite, God is called אֲדֹנִים, *Adonim* or Lords. Many learned men, however, as Calvin, the two Buxtorfs, and others, have maintained that these names afford no satisfactory proof of a plurality in the Divine essence; and that they are to be accounted for by a peculiarity in the Hebrew language, which expresses in this manner dignity and majesty, a variety of powers, and a multitude of operations. They object, that when אֱלֹהִים *Elohim* in the plural number is applied to God, it cannot always be understood to denote a plurality of persons, because it is used exclusively of one person. “אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֶיךָ, *Elohim, Eloheihā*, God, thy God hath anointed thee.” * This is evidently the Father. “Thy throne, אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*, O God, is for ever and ever.” † This is spoken of the Son. Now if אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*, signified the Trinity, it could not be properly used of one Divine person, as distinguished from the other two. It could not be said, the Father is the Trinity, the Son is the Trinity, the Holy Ghost is the Trinity. They object again, that this name, in the plural number, is given to other individuals in whom there is no Trinity or plurality, as to the Golden Calf, and to the heathen gods, Dagon of the Philistines, Ashteroth of the Sidonians, Chemos of the Moabites, Milcom of the Ammonites. What Trinity or plurality can it denote in these cases? If this holy mystery is implied in it, is it probable that it would have been employed to designate vile and contemptible idols? Farther, if this name is significant of a Trinity of persons, as Jehovah is of unity, propriety would have required, not only that it should be appropriated to God, but that it should have been always expressed in the plural number; whereas in several places it occurs in the singular, when the three persons must be understood. Lastly, it is objected, that while the name is sometimes joined with plural adjectives and verbs where an individual is evidently spoken of, it is also construed with verbs and adjectives singular when the true God is spoken of; and that from all this it appears, that nothing can be inferred but a peculiar idiom of the Hebrew, which admitted the plural and singular indifferently.

* Ps. xlv. 7.

† Ib. 6.

To these objections answers have been returned. It has been shewn that there is ground to call in question the grammatical rule of the Rabbies, "that substantives of dignity, honour, and dominion, are put in the plural form, although denoting only a singular object, and are joined in agreement with verbs or adjectives in the singular." The plural noun בעלים, *baghalim*, Lords or Masters, is used to signify the proprietor of an ass or a well, in which case the idea of dignity and majesty is ridiculous. "It is not a little remarkable," it has been said, "that such a circumstance" (the use of the plural noun *Elohim*, to denote the true God) "should exist in the sacred books of a people who were separated from all other nations for this express object, that they should bear a public and continual protest against polytheism; a people whose whole system of religious, political, and domestic usages was calculated, with consummate prudence and wisdom, to be a perpetual preservative from polytheistic notions; a people who are charged by the Eternal God to destroy every statue, structure, and grove that might recall the memory of idolatrous rites, and to extirpate every thing that could be extirpated, which had been associated with idolatry, or might be converted into an instrument of its revival or of its slightest palliation; who were enjoined to abolish every name of city, village, or place, which was compounded with the name of a heathen deity, and to substitute new appellations; who were not even to pronounce those names unless necessity compelled;—is it not, we may well say, a little remarkable that, in the sacred books of such a people, books whose very words, in many cases at least, were selected and dictated by the inspiration of Jehovah, the ordinary name and style of the Only Living and True God should be in a *plural* form? Did some strange and insuperable necessity lie in the way? Was the language so poor, that it could furnish no other term? Or if so, could not the wisdom of inspiration have suggested a new appellative, and have for ever abolished the hazardous word? None of these reasons existed. The language was rich and copious. The names of the Deity in general and constant use were more numerous than in either of the beautiful languages of classical antiquity, or in the most cultivated tongues of modern Europe. Besides

“ that glorious and fearful name JEHOVAH ” the appropriated and unique style of the true God, and besides other unexceptionable terms, there was the *singular* form, *Eloah*, of the very word in question. There was no shadow of necessity, difficulty, or even inducement, for the adoption of a phraseology, which *on Unitarian principles* every candid mind must confess, can with difficulty, if at all, be defended from the charge of pernicious example, and very dangerous tendency.” * It cannot be denied, that there is considerable force in these observations ; but as the arguments are strong on both sides, it is best to pass over this proof of a plurality in the Godhead, and to proceed to others which are less liable to objection.

There are several passages of the Old Testament in which God speaks of himself as more than one : “ Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness.” “ Behold the man is become as one of *us*.” “ Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us* ? ” “ Let *us* go down, and there confound their tongue.” † They are certainly remarkable, when taken in connexion with the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that there is no God but one. The reasoning which we have lately heard concerning the plural name of God, is applicable here in all its force. If the use of a plural name to denote an individual was a peculiarity of the Hebrew language, it would be understood, and no danger would arise from it ; but it is quite a different thing to introduce a person speaking of himself as more than one, using plural pronouns to designate himself. We have no example in Scripture of such phraseology in reference to any being but God, although plural names are used of other individuals ; and we are necessarily led to suppose that there is a reason for this usage which does not exist in any other case. God might have accommodated himself to the idiom of the people whom he addressed, and have allowed himself to be called by a plural name ; but we cannot conceive him to have spoken of himself in a manner which would suggest the idea of plurality, although it was his express purpose to teach them his unity. Why should he have said, without any cause, “ Let *us* make ? ”

* Dr Pye Smith's Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, b. ii. ch. iv. § 34.

† Gen. i. 26. iii. 22. Isaiah vi. 8. Gen. xi. 7.

Would it not have been as easy, more correct, and better adapted to his design, to say, “Let *me* make?” It is vain to tell us, that on these occasions the Almighty adopted the style of monarchs, who say “We” and “Us.” We have no reason to think, that this style was known in the days of Moses; there are no examples of it among the nations of antiquity; it seems to be a modern invention. It is vain to pretend that he addressed angels, or included inferior beings. This is a figment of the Jews, so absurd, and even impious, that Christians should have been ashamed to make it their own; and we venture to affirm that not one of them would have done so, had he not been disposed to grasp at any thing which would help him to evade this argument for a plurality of persons in the Godhead.

Another proof has been drawn from the blessing which Aaron was commanded to pronounce upon the children of Israel. “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”* The proof is founded on the three-fold repetition of the name JEHOVAH, and the correspondence of the whole with the Christian benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.”†

We may put the same construction on the three-fold ascription of holiness to God by the seraphim whom Isaiah saw in the Temple:—“Holy, holy, holy is JEHOVAH God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”‡ We may the more readily refer it to a plurality of persons in the Godhead, when we consider that on this occasion the Lord said, “Who shall go for *us*?” and observe that in the New Testament, the Son and the Spirit are represented as having been concerned in this vision. The Evangelist John says, that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ at this time; § and Paul, that it was the Holy Ghost who spake these words:—“Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.”||

* Numb. vi. 24—26.

§ John xii. 41.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

|| Acts xxviii. 25, 26.

‡ Isaiah vi. 3.

The following passages have been considered as giving indications of a plurality of persons : “ Then JEHOVAH rained fire and brimstone from JEHOVAH out of heaven.” “ I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by JEHOVAH their God.” “ Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.” * In all these passages there seems to be a distinct reference to two persons : in the first, to one who from another, or in concurrence with him, destroyed the cities of the plain ; in the second, to one who would save the Israelites by the agency of another ; in the third, to one who is intreated by Daniel to hear his prayers for the sake of another ; and in all these cases, both are spoken of as Divine.

In the forty-fifth Psalm, we find these words addressed by one Divine person to another : “ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” † We have the authority of an inspired commentator for saying that the speaker is the Father, and the person spoken to is the Son ; ‡ and it is worthy of attention, that the Father gives him the appellation of God in a sense in which it never was given to creatures of the highest order. Must we not infer, that, although the Divine nature is one, there is some mysterious distinction in it, by which only such language can be satisfactorily explained ?

“ Come ye near unto me, hear ye this ; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning ; from the time that it was, there am I ; and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me ;” || or more correctly, “ the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit.” There is mention made in this passage of three persons, one who sends, and two who are sent. The speaker is God ; for he assumes the name, and titles, and works of God, calling himself the First and the Last, the Creator of heaven and earth ; but at the same time he says that he was sent by God ; not surely sent by himself, for such language would have no meaning, but by a distinct person. That person is represented as having sent also another, who is called his Spirit ; which is not a name for an influence,

* Gen. xix. 24. Hos. i. 7. Dan. ix. 17. † Ps. xlv. 6.

‡ Heb. i. 8.

|| Isa. xlviii. 16.

energy, or operation, but for a living intelligent agent, as will afterwards appear when we come to speak of him particularly, and is plain to every candid reader of the Scriptures. It was he who in the beginning moved upon the face of the waters ; it was he who garnished the heavens ; it was he who spoke by the prophets, and gave them the knowledge of future events ; and to him the Psalmist ascribes the attribute of omnipresence : “ Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? ” *

In a word, the Messiah is represented as a distinct person from Him who promised to send him, and the Jews never entertained any doubt of his personality. Yet the manner in which he is spoken of, renders it absolutely certain that he was superior to all the prophets, higher than the kings of the earth, and possessed of proper divinity. He is called the Son of God, † and if we believe an Apostle, ‡ in a sense which excludes all creatures from a claim to the same relation. He is called “ the Mighty God,” § and dignified with the incommunicable name, the name expressive of self-existence, independence, and eternal duration : “ In those days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely ; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” || It is remarkable, that in a passage which evidently refers to him, and is applied in the New Testament to the treachery of Judas, it is JEHOVAH who speaks : “ And JEHOVAH said unto me, Cast it unto the potter : a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.” ¶

These are some of the notices of a plurality in the Godhead, which we find in the Jewish Scriptures ; but we may expect clearer manifestations of the doctrine in the New Testament, which is the completion of the Old. “ The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” ** In this manner the Evangelist expresses the superiority of the present to the former dispensation.

I proceed to lay before you the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity, which is furnished by the Christian Scriptures.

* Ps. cxxxix. 7.

† Ps. ii. 7.

‡ Heb. i. 5.

§ Isaiah ix. 6.

|| Jer. xxiii. 6.

¶ Zech. xi. 13.

Matt. xxvii. 9.

** 1 John ii. 8.

I begin with the celebrated passage in the fifth chapter of the first Epistle of John, verse 7. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." Three persons are mentioned as distinct witnesses, and at the same time are affirmed to be one; although some think that the Apostle refers not to a unity of essence, but of testimony, or that nothing more is meant than that, like the three earthly witnesses, they agree in one. I need not tell you that the genuineness of this passage has been disputed; the controversy is so important, and has engaged so much attention, that none of you can be ignorant of it. It is now generally acknowledged by critics to be spurious; and in doing so, they proceed upon the following grounds. In the first place, it is affirmed by Griesbach, that in no library of Europe does there exist any Greek manuscript in which this verse is found. He qualifies this assertion, however, by referring to one or two manuscripts in which it does appear; and it ought to be observed, that he can be understood to speak only of manuscripts which have been collated, for there are many hundreds which have not been examined. There are three in which it occurs, the Codex Guelpherbytanus, the Codex Ravianus, or Berolinensis, and the Codex Britannicus, or Montfortianus, or Dublinensis, for it is known by all these names. But they are of no authority. The first is a manuscript of the seventeenth century, for it contains the Latin translation of Beza; the second is a transcript of the Complutensian edition of the New Testament, with some various readings from Stephens' third edition, and cannot therefore be older than the sixteenth century; and the last was written, according to some, in the twelfth or thirteenth century, or according to others, in the fifteenth or sixteenth. It is therefore of very little value, and its testimony is as nothing when opposed to the silence of all other manuscripts. In the second place, it was not admitted into the earliest printed editions of Erasmus, nor into the version of Luther. It first appeared in the edition of Complutum, and is said to have been translated from Latin into Greek; from that edition it was afterwards adopted by Erasmus, and thence found its way into the editions of Stephens and Beza, and last of all into the

Elzevir edition of A. D. 1624, after which all our common editions are printed. In the third place, the verse is omitted by all the Greek Fathers, although they quote the words which precede and follow it, collect proofs of the Trinity from all quarters, and even apply to this subject the next verse concerning the earthly witnesses, endeavouring to deduce from it and the context the divinity of the Spirit. Two or three passages have been produced which seem to refer to this text; but they are supposed to be taken from ecclesiastical formularies, or the technical language of the church; and although it were certain that they are quotations, nothing more could be justly inferred, than that in the days of the authors the text was not altogether unknown, but was generally considered as spurious, and hence, with an exception or two, no person appealed to it. In the fourth place, it was wanting in the ancient versions, the Syriac, the Arabic, the Coptic, the Ethiopic, the Armenian, the Sahidic, and the Slavonic. It was wanting originally in all these, although it now appears in some of them, having been inserted by modern editors; but this interpolation does not weaken the argument in the slightest degree. It was not in the copies from which those translations were made; and some of them are of very high antiquity. We must except the Latin version, in most manuscripts of which the text is found, but not in them all. It is wanting in all the manuscripts written before the ninth century, and in most of those which are ancient though posterior to that date. Where it has found a place, it stands on the margin, or is interlined by a different hand; or if originally belonging to the text, it differs in words and position in different manuscripts. In a word, it is omitted by several of the Latin Fathers on occasions when it would have been pertinent to their design, and they might have been expected to quote it. But on the other hand, it is cited by many of them, who seem to have entertained no doubt of its genuineness. This, however, only proves, that it was in their copies; but we should remember, that they used a translation, which might be interpolated; and they cannot be admitted as witnesses of equal authority with the Greek Fathers, who knew and quoted from the original.

For the reasons now stated, the verse is considered by most learned men to be an interpolation, and accordingly is excluded from the text in the edition of Griesbach. There are some however, who are disposed to think it genuine on the ground, not only of its being quoted, perhaps by one or two of the Greek, and by so many of the Latin Fathers, but because it appears to them that there is internal evidence in its favour. It seems necessary to complete the sense, by giving the witnesses in heaven as well as the witnesses on earth. Two arguments are founded on the grammatical construction. If we leave out the disputed passage, and read only—"There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood," we have *τρεις οἱ μαρτυροῦντες* in the masculine gender, agreeing with three neuter nouns, *το πνεῦμα, το ὕδωρ, και το αἷμα*, contrary to one of the common rules of syntax; while concord is preserved, if we admit after them, *ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, και το ἅγιον πνεῦμα*, because the first and second are masculine, and the adjectives or participles agreeing with them must be of the same gender. It may be objected, that the same difficulty occurs, if we retain the disputed passage; for the Apostle repeats *τρεις οἱ μαρτυροῦντες*, before *το πνεῦμα, το ὕδωρ, και το αἷμα*. It is replied, that if *τρεις* and *μαρτυροῦντες* were first used with *ὁ πατήρ* and *ὁ λόγος*, they might be used again in the next verse although the nouns in concord were neuter, without any violation of syntax, according to the figure called *attraction*, which made them agree with the nouns which preceded, instead of those which followed; whereas, when the passage is corrected by the omission of the seventh verse, *τρεις* and *μαρτυροῦντες* are ungrammatical, there being no masculine nouns with which they may be construed. To take away the force of this argument, it has been said, that the nouns *πνεῦμα, ὕδωρ, and αἷμα* are personified, being represented as witnesses, and consequently, that *τρεις* and *μαρτυροῦντες* are properly used, as they refer not to their gender but to their import. Another argument, or rather doubt, arises from the use of the article in the end of the verse which speaks of the earthly witnesses, *και οἱ τρεις εἰς το ἐν εἰσιν*. The article, according to the laws of the Greek language, refers to a former mention of the subject, and could be easily accounted for, if the seventh

verse were genuine ; but if it be rejected, there is a reference in the article, but no antecedent. If *ἐν* in the seventh verse be excluded, we cannot understand how it appears for the first time, accompanied with the article *το*. The doubt has been proposed by Dr Middleton, who concludes by saying :—" I am not ignorant, that in the rejection of the controverted passage, learned and good men are now, for the most part, agreed ; and I contemplate with admiration and delight the gigantic exertions of intellect, which have established this acquiescence ; the objection, however, which has given rise to this discussion, I could not consistently with my plan suppress. On the whole I am led to suspect, that though so much labour and critical acuteness have been bestowed on these celebrated verses, more is yet to be done, before the mystery in which they are involved can be wholly developed." * It is evident, that in the present state of the controversy respecting this text, we can make no use of it, to prove the doctrine of the Trinity.

The transaction at our Saviour's baptism has been appealed to as a proof of the Trinity, because the three persons were then manifested ; the Son who came to be baptized, the Holy Ghost who descended like a dove and lighted upon him, and the Father who spoke with an audible voice. But before this proof could be admitted, we must know who Christ was, and what was the import of the title, Son, by which he was designated, and likewise who the Spirit was, and whether the emblem signified a person or an influence. This information is gathered from other passages ; and therefore the transaction itself is not a proper proof of a Trinity in the Godhead, although it may be an illustration of it.

A more satisfactory argument is founded upon the institution of baptism, and the form of administration :—" Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." † Baptism is a religious ordinance, which it would be contrary to all our ideas of religion derived from reason and Scripture, to suppose administered in any name but that of the object of worship. It is a dedication to the service of God ; and according to the Uni-

* Middleton on the Greek article, p. 652. edit. 1608. † Mat. xxviii. 19.

tarian hypothesis, we are dedicated at the same time to the Creator and to two of his creatures, or to a man like ourselves, and a Divine influence or operation ! The initiatory rite of Christianity is evidently intended to teach us, that while there is one God, there are three persons of equal dignity and authority, who are severally concerned in the work of our salvation, and to whose glory we are bound to consecrate our bodies and our souls.

Another proof of a Trinity is furnished by the apostolical benediction. “ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” * This is evidently a prayer, which it would be impiety and idolatry to address to any other but God. Yet three persons are distinctly addressed, and consequently are recognized as possessed of Divine perfections ; as knowing our wants and hearing our requests, and able to do what we ask ; as the fountain of all the blessedness implied in the terms, grace, love, and communion.

The Book of Revelation commences with these words :— “ Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are before the throne ; and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness.” † This also is a prayer to the Father and the Son. But who is meant by the seven Spirits ? I presume that no Protestant will say that they are created spirits. There is reason to believe, that agreeably to a Hebrew idiom which uses the number seven to express what is perfect, the seven Spirits before the throne signify the Holy Spirit in the fulness and variety of his gifts and influences ; and if so, all the three persons are acknowledged to be Divine, separately and conjunctly the object of worship, the source of grace and peace, of spiritual and heavenly blessings.

I shall quote only one passage more. “ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” ‡ The subject of discourse is the dispensation of grace, in which there are three distinct agents, obviously exer-

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

† Rev. i. 4, 5.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 4—6.

cising equal authority, the Spirit, the Lord, and God or the Father.

There is a general argument, upon which I cannot enter fully at present, lest I should anticipate what will be more properly introduced in another place. It is this, that in the New Testament, two persons besides the Father are mentioned in innumerable places, and mentioned in such terms as elevate them above the condition of creatures, and import their proper Divinity. Not only is the one called the Son, and the other the Spirit of the Father, to denote their intimate relation to him, but both receive the names of God and Lord without qualification, are invested with Divine attributes, have works ascribed to them which finite power could not have performed, and as we have seen, are conjoined with the Father as objects of religious worship and obedience. Shall we say that the sacred writers have indulged in a figurative and ornamented style; that instead of words of truth and soberness, they have given us highly coloured descriptions, and that too in treating a subject of the greatest importance, which demanded the utmost precision of sentiment and expression? They may say so who deny their inspiration, and looking upon them as common men, do not hesitate to accuse them of prejudices, mistakes, and illogical reasoning. But if we believe that they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we will also believe that they were in no danger of being misled by imagination, but rigidly adhered to the simple truth; and that if they had felt any inclination to wander into the regions of fancy, it would have been controlled. They have represented two persons besides the Father as Divine; and as, at the same time, they maintain the unity of God, the necessary inference is, that in their judgment this unity is consistent with personal distinctions. In other words, they have taught the doctrine of the Trinity.

LECTURE XXIX.

ON THE TRINITY.

PARTICULAR STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.—
THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE ESSENCE.—DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE
PERSONS.—OPINIONS RESPECTING A SUBORDINATION OF PERSONS CON-
SIDERED.—NATURE OF THE SONSHIP.—HERESIES OPPOSED TO THIS DOC-
TRINE : SABELLIANISM ; ARIANISM ; TRITHEISM.—NOTICE OF SOME
OBJECTIONS.

I HAVE already stated the doctrine in the words of our Confession of Faith, which it is unnecessary to repeat. I shall add in this place the words of the Athanasian Creed, after observing, that it was composed long after the age of Athanasius, but goes under his name because it is understood to teach the doctrine, which he held and strenuously maintained against the heretics of his time, and particularly the Arians, who were then the predominant party. It has been ascribed to Vigilius, an African Bishop in the sixth century, or to Hilary of Arles in France in A. D. 450. "The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance: for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal."—"The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord; and yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For, likeas we are compell-

ed by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say that there be three Gods, or three Lords."

In the first place, we assert that there is only one essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that they have the same *numerical*, and not merely the same *specific* essence. It may be proper to explain the difference between these two words as they are used in speaking of this subject. Numerical signifies one in number, and specific, of the same species. When we say that the essence is numerically one, we mean that the same essence belongs to all the persons in common; but were we to attribute to them the same specific essence, we should mean nothing more than what we affirm of three men, when we say that they have all a nature of the same species, or are all partakers of human nature. In the former case, we maintain that there is only one God, although there are more Divine persons than one; in the latter, we should maintain that there are three Gods. To express the unity of the essence, the word *ὁμοουσιος* was employed by the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, and the Son was declared to be *ὁμοουσιος* or consubstantial with the Father. It had been used in the same sense by some writers before the meeting of the Council. It is remarkable, however, that it had been rejected by the Council of Antioch, A. D. 263, on account of the inference which Paul of Samosata pretended to draw from it, namely, that if Christ and the Spirit were consubstantial with the Father, it followed that there were three substances, one prior and two posterior derived from it. To guard against this inference, the Council declared that the Son was not *ὁμοουσιος τῷ Πατρὶ*. Paul seems to have explained the term as signifying *specific*, or *of the same species*; and it is certain that this sense had sometimes been given to it. Thus Aristotle calls the stars *ὁμοουσια*, meaning that they were all of the same nature. But in the Creed of Nice it is expressive of unity of essence, and was adopted after considerable discussion, as proper to be opposed to the Arians, who affirmed that the essence of the Son was different and separate from that of the Father. Thus the unity of substance was established as an article of faith in

the Catholic church ; and the doctrine was confirmed by subsequent councils. The Council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, says in an epistle addressed to the bishops assembled in Rome : —“ The faith of the Nicene fathers ought to be approved by us, and by you, and by all who do not pervert the word of truth, which is the most ancient, and is agreeable to our baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, namely, that there is one divinity, power, and essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that they have equal dignity and co-eternal dominion, and that they co-exist in three perfect hypostases or persons.”

In the second place, we assert that in this one essence there is a three-fold distinction, which we express by saying, that there are three persons. This word is derived from the Latin term *persona*, but the Greeks used *ὑποστασις* and *προσωπον*. The first occurs in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Son is called, *χαρακτηρ ὑποστασεως* of the Father.* In our version it is rendered *person*, but some think that it should be translated *substance*. We might ask them in what sense Christ could be the image of the Father's substance, unless his own substance were different ? and then we must concur with the Arians, who objected to the term *ὁμοουσιος*, but were willing to admit *ὁμοιουσιος*, of a similar substance, and might plead the authority of the Apostle. He who is the image of another's substance, does not certainly possess that substance, and is therefore a separate being. Necessity seems to require, that whatever may have been the original meaning of *ὑποστασις*, it should here be translated *person*. At the same time, it must be acknowledged, that it was understood by many of the ancients to signify *substance*. It was frequently used in the sense of *ουσια* or *essence* ; and the application of it to designate a distinction in the Godhead was objected to, as leading to the unscriptural conclusion of three substances, and consequently three Gods. The objection was made by some of the Greeks, and by the Latins, who translated *ὑποστασις*, *substantia*. Still, however, the word was retained to express a distinction in the one Divine nature, and the use afterwards became general. The Synod of Alexandria, A. D. 362, decreed, “ that

* Heb. i. 3.

any person was at liberty to maintain, that there was only one hypostasis in the Godhead, provided that a three-fold distinction in it was preserved, or to maintain that there were three hypostases, provided that only one substance was meant." The Greeks employed another term to denote this distinction. Προσωπον properly signifies *the face*, and occurs in this sense in several passages, as τότε δε προσωπον προς προσωπον, "but then face to face." * But it is used also both in the New Testament, and by profane writers, to signify *a person*, and hence was preferred by some to ὑποστασις as less ambiguous. "When we speak of God," says Gregory Nazianzen, "we are surrounded with a light which is one and three-fold; three-fold in respect of the properties, or the ὑποστασεις, if any one chuses to use this term, or the προσωπα, for we do not contend about the names if they agree in meaning; but one in respect of the essence or divinity."

In the common acceptation of *person*, it denotes a separate and independent being, whose existence and actions have no necessary connexion with the existence and actions of any other being. It has been defined to be a thinking substance which can act by itself, or an intelligent agent who is neither a part of, nor sustained by another. We must be cautious in transferring to the Deity, definitions which originate in the state and circumstances of created beings. The cases are totally dissimilar. Three human persons have the same specific nature, but three Divine persons have the same numerical nature. Antitrinitarians affirm, that by holding three Divine persons we necessarily make three Gods, because they most unfairly maintain, in the face of our solemn protestations, that we affix the same idea to the word person, which it bears when used in reference to men. But we deny that it has this meaning. We do not teach, that there are three distinct essences mysteriously conjoined; that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit possess, each of them separately from the others, a Divine nature, and Divine perfections. What we believe is this, that there is a distinction in the Godhead, to which there is nothing similar in creatures, who are one in every sense of the term; and we employ the word person, to

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

express that distinction. It may be objectionable, because being applied to other beings, it is apt to suggest an idea which is inconsistent with the unity of God ; but this is the unavoidable consequence of the imperfection of human language ; and we endeavour to guard against the abuse by declaring that, in this application, it must be qualified so as to exclude a separate existence. We must cease to speak of God, if we wait till we find terms and phrases adequate to the subject. We are obliged to take common words, and if they are not exactly suitable to the subject, we are surely at liberty to define them, to fix the sense in which we intend to make use of them, to enlarge or restrict it as the case shall require. Now when we say that there are three persons in the Godhead, the word person, signifies a distinction which we do not pretend to explain, but which does not intrench upon the unity of essence. I shall quote a few sentences from a recent work on the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, by Professor Stuart of Andover in America. “ What, you will doubtless ask, is that distinction in the Godhead, which the word *person* is meant to designate ? I answer without hesitation, that I do not know. The *fact* that a distinction exists, is what we aver ; the definition of that distinction is what I shall by no means attempt. By what shall I, or can I, define it ? What simile drawn from created objects, which are necessarily derived and dependent, can illustrate the mode of existence in that Being, who is underived, independent, unchangeable, infinite, eternal ? I confess myself unable to advance a single step here in explaining what the distinction is. *I receive the fact that it exists, simply because I believe that the Scriptures reveal the FACT.* And if the Scriptures do reveal the fact, that there are three *persons* in the Godhead ; that there is a distinction which affords ground for the appellations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; which lays the foundation for the application of the personal pronouns *I, thou, he* ; which renders it proper to speak of *sending and being sent* ; of Christ *being with God, being in his bosom*, and other things of the like nature ; and yet, that the Divine nature belongs to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; then it is, like every other

fact revealed, to be received simply on the credit of Divine revelation."*

Some have attempted to give us an idea of this distinction, but the success of the experiment is extremely questionable. Dr Chauncey, a celebrated divine of the last century, proposes this question, "How may this great mystery be a little illustrated to our understandings, so as to have a glimpse of a little part of it?" and gives the following answer:—"The first Being living a most perfect life of fruition in communion, and being but one infinitely pure act, doth most transcendently comprehend and conceive himself, beholding his own most glorious image by his infinite understanding, reflecting on himself as the chiefest good, which he enjoys in the highest mutual love and delight." This, I confess, is not very intelligible; but he goes on:—"God reflecting upon and conceiving himself, is God in the person of the Father; God conceived as his own most glorious image, is God in the person of the Son; God enjoying himself as his own chiefest good in the relation of Father and Son, with ineffable love and delight, is the third person, the Holy Ghost." It is surprising that this worthy man did not perceive that this is a metaphysical Trinity, for the Son is an idea, and the Spirit is joy or love. There is no other distinction here than what exists between the mind and its thoughts and emotions. There is nothing which corresponds to personality. I presume that no man will be made wiser by this pretended explanation, which tends rather to confound, and to make us think, that if this is really the Trinity of the Scriptures, it amounts to nothing, and God is still one in every sense of the term. Such is the fate of attempts to go beyond our limit, to intrude into things which we have not seen. We are either utterly lost, and amused with words in the room of ideas, or we are involved in obscurity and heresy. Dr Chauncey is not the only person who has been led away by this strange speculation. It is as ancient as the days of the Fathers, and has been adopted by persons of high name in modern times. Dr Horsley, who in learning and talent had few equals, has pursued it, as we see from the manner in which he states the sentiments of

* Stuart on the Trinity and Divinity of Christ, in answer to Channing, letter iii.

Athenagoras :—“ The Logos hath existed from eternity in union with the Father ; ‘ because God, being eternally rational, ever had the Logos in himself.’ The sense is, that the personal subsistence of a Divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and *seems to be founded in Scripture*, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the Divine Intellect exerted on itself, from the Father’s contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever active Intellect must ever have contemplated ; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son.” * This fanciful theory, for it deserves no better name, has found patrons and advocates among Protestants and Papists, and among the latter has received the sanction of the Church. †

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are persons, and are distinguished from each other by their personal properties. Divine perfections are common to them all, eternity, immutability, power, wisdom, and goodness ; but a personal property is something peculiar to each, something which may be affirmed of one, but cannot be affirmed of the other two. The appellations Father and Son, imply a relation between the persons. That a relation is also implied in the designation of the third person is not so certain, unless we suppose, that as the word *πνευμα* signifies also *air in motion* or *breath*, it refers to his procession, from the Father according to the Greeks, or from the Father and the Son according to the Latins. This, however, is a faint and doubtful analogy. By those relations the subsistences in the Godhead are distinguished from each other ; but in all other respects there is the most perfect similarity. Paternity is the personal property of the first person, filiation of the second, and procession, or as the Schoolmen speak, spiration, of the third. The first person begat the second, the second was begotten of the first, and

* Horsley’s Tracts in controversy with Dr Priestley, p. 61. Edit. 1812.

† Ibid. Disquisition fourth.

the third proceeded from both. "The Father," says the Athanasian creed, "is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding." These properties distinguish the persons of the Trinity, they characterize them individually, so that we can speak of one without speaking, at the same time, of another; but the properties themselves we do not understand. If it should be said, that, in this case, we use words without meaning, the same objection may be made to us when we speak of the self-existence and the immensity of God. We can affix no positive ideas to these terms, but they deny that God had a beginning, and that he is confined to a particular place. The same purpose is served by those personal properties; they enable us to affirm that the Father is not the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is a different person from both.

The persons of the Trinity are farther distinguished by their operations. The Divine nature, indeed, is the common principle of operation in the external works of creation and providence; but revelation gives us some notices of the distinct agency of the persons. Thus, in the beginning the Spirit moved, or exerted his influence, upon the dark and undigested mass which had been produced out of nothing; and from other passages we learn that it was the Son whose omnipotent fiat all things obeyed, for by him the Father made the worlds. The Father is not immediately concerned in any external operation, but exerts his energies by the Son and the Spirit. To this subject, we may refer the words of our Lord concerning the cure which he had wrought on the Sabbath. He justified himself against the charge of having profaned that day, by the plea that all his works were performed in concurrence with his Father: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* In redemption, the persons are clearly distinguished by offices and works, which are respectively assigned to them.

* John v. 17, 19.

It is said, that the Father sent the Son, but never that the Son sent the Father; that the Son sent the Spirit, but not that the Spirit sent the Son. We find, indeed, the Messiah saying in one of the prophets, "The Lord God and his Spirit have sent me;"* but the proper translation is, "The Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit." It was the Word who was made flesh, the Son who assumed our nature; this act of ineffable condescension is never attributed to the Father or to the Spirit. On the other hand, it was the Father whose voice was heard at his baptism, and on the Mount of Transfiguration, proclaiming him to be his beloved Son; and it was the Spirit who descended in a visible form, and rested upon him. We do not understand how, the nature being one, acts are performed by one person which cannot be ascribed to another; but the fact is stated in the Scriptures, and it is the office of faith to receive its testimony without disputing.

The Father is called the first person, the Son the second, and the Holy Ghost the third. This is the order of their subsistence, and it is pointed out by their internal relations; but beware of thinking that it implies the priority of one to another, in time or in dignity. "In this Trinity," I again quote the words of the Athanasian Creed, "in this Trinity, none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped."

Some Trinitarians are of opinion, that three co-ordinate persons would be three Gods, and therefore maintain the subordination of the Son and the Spirit. This subject is discussed at considerable length by Bishop Bull, in his learned work, entitled *Defensio Fidei Nicenæ*, where he lays down, and supports by the authority of the Fathers, the three following propositions: "First, the Catholic doctors, who lived before and after, have approved the doctrine of the Council of Nice, that the Son is *θεος εκ θεου*, God of God; for they have all taught with one mouth that the Divine nature and perfections belong to the Father and the Son, not collaterally or co-ordinately, but subordinately; that is, that the Son has

* Isaiah xlviii. 16.

the same Divine nature with the Father, but communicated by the Father; so that the Father alone has the Divine nature from himself, or from no other; but the Son from the Father, and that therefore the Father is the fountain, origin, and principle of the Divinity which is in the Son.”* He goes on to shew that the ancient doctors called the Father *αρχη*, the *principle* of the Son; meaning by *αρχη*, *that* from which any thing takes its origin, whether in time or in eternity; that they called him *αἰτιος* or *αἰτία*, the *cause* of the Son; *πηγή*, or *fountain*, and *auctor*, *author*, a word used by the Latins. “Secondly, the Catholic doctors determined with unanimous consent, that the Father was greater than the Son in respect of his Divinity, not in nature or in any essential perfection which is in the Father and not in the Son; but solely by authority; that is, by origin, since the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son.”† “Thirdly, the ancient doctors judged, that the doctrine concerning the subordination of the Son to the Father as his origin and principle, was very useful, and evidently necessary to be known, for this reason, that chiefly in this way the divinity of the Son is so asserted, that the unity of God and the divine monarchy are preserved entire; for, although the name and nature of God are common to two, the Father and the Son, yet, since the one is the principle of the other, from whom he is propagated, and that by an interior not an external production, it may be justly said that there is only one God. The ancients believed that the same reason was applicable to the divinity of the Holy Spirit.”‡ But although these views are recommended by the authority of the Fathers, and have been very generally adopted by modern divines, I cannot bring myself to agree with them. It is dangerous to speak of a subordination among the persons of the Trinity, and it is almost impossible to avoid the idea of inferiority in the subordinate persons: It seems also absurd, while we admit at the same time, that the persons equally possess the divine nature and perfections. What puzzles me most of all, is to perceive how subordination is necessary to preserve the unity of God; because it should seem to me,

* Defensio Fidei Nicenæ, sect. iv. cap. 1. † Ibid. cap. 2. ‡ Ibid. cap. 4.

that nothing was so calculated to make us doubt the unity as subordination of any kind, and that it is more easily conceived, if all the persons are equal in every respect. The unity is maintained, by excluding the idea of division or separation, and assigning the same numerical essence to all the persons. It occurs to me, that, after all this learned talk about communication, origin, principle, fountain, and cause, nothing more is meant than what we all acknowledge, that the nature of the Son is the very same with the nature of the Father, which certainly is necessary to preserve the unity ; but such terms are unhappily employed to express it. Bishop Horsley, who was of the same opinion with Bishop Bull and the Fathers, might well call the subordination of the Son, mysterious ; for a subordination among equal persons, a subordination of one who is truly God, is indeed a mystery, a thing perfectly unintelligible.

What has led so many to maintain the subordination of the Son, is the notion, that the relation, which this name implies, is founded on the communication of the Divine essence to him. Hence they object to the application of the term *αυτοθεος* to the Son, if it mean any thing more than that he is truly God ; and they affirm that it is contrary to truth, as well as to the usage of the Church, to say that he *αυτοθεος*, if the word import that he is God of himself, because he derived his divinity from the Father. This is the doctrine of the Nicene Creed : Πιστευομεν εις 'ενα κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον τον 'υιον του θεου γεννηθεντα εκ του πατρος μονογενη, τουτεστιν εκ της ουσιας του πατρος. Θεον εκ θεου, φως εκ φωτος, θεον αληθινον εκ θεου αληθινου.

This will be the proper place to introduce some observations on the Sonship of Christ. In modern times, different reasons have been assigned for this appellation, partly by the opponents of his Divinity—with whom we have at present no immediate concern—and partly by some Trinitarians, who think that it is not founded on a natural, but an official, relation to the first person in the Godhead. The motive, I apprehend, by which they have been led to deny his eternal generation, is the difficulty of conceiving any thing, in the Divine nature, analogous to the process which the term denotes in its application to creatures. But

the difficulty is created by themselves, when they take it for granted, from the use of the term, *begotten*, that it was designed to suggest a resemblance between Divine and human generation. Ought not men to have paused before they drew this inference? Might it not have occurred to them that, as the subjects were so different, the term must have a different meaning? Would it not have been wise, instead of proceeding to explain the one by the other, to have acknowledged that the relation between the Father and the Son was altogether above our comprehension; that the words, *Son* and *begotten*, were intended solely to express a distinction of persons and a mutual relation; and that the only conclusion which we could safely draw from them is, that the second person of the Trinity has the same nature with the first, is his perfect image, and the object of his infinite love? Were human ideas discarded; were we content to believe, without pushing our inquiries into the region of mystery, the eternal generation of the Son would be admitted, provided that sufficient evidence of it were found in the Scriptures.

When God calls our Saviour his own Son, ὁ ἑαυτοῦ υἱός, ὁ ἰδιος υἱός, one should think, that sound criticism would require us to believe, that he is his Son as truly as one man is the son of another, although we know not the manner of the relation; his Son literally and not metaphorically, unless it can be shewn that such filiation is impossible, or that the Scriptures have explained it in a different sense. His Sonship, indeed, seems to be founded on his miraculous conception in these words of the angel to the virgin:—"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."* But the common answer, that the "holy thing" or his human nature became the Son of God by its union to his Divine Person, is quite satisfactory, especially if other passages place his Sonship upon a different foundation. I do not think, that his miraculous conception would justify the epithet, *only-begotten*; because the creation of Adam, although in some respect different, was equally *miraculous*, if this term may be used in ref-

* Luke i. 35.

erence to an event which took place before the laws of nature began their course ; and, on account of it, he also is called the Son of God. Were a man, who had never heard of the controversy relative to the origin of his Sonship, to read such passages as these ; “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,” “ When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son,” he would be surprised, I presume, that it had ever been the subject of dispute. He would say—it is plain that the person who was sent, possessed this character prior to his mission ; and would be astonished to be informed by some modern Divine, that this was a mistake, for that he was made the Son of God by being sent. It would never enter into any man’s mind, when he was told that a king had sent his son to negotiate with his enemies, that his son meant only a favourite, or an extraordinary ambassador. If it should be said, that, in this case, the meaning of the word Son is determinate, being ascertained by common usage, I would ask, what makes it less so, when it is applied to our Saviour ? Not any thing in the phraseology of Scripture, but the impossibility under which some men labour of conceiving, how God can have a Son by an essential relation. But do not Unitarians, on the same ground, explain away the passages which teach the divinity and atonement of Christ ? And how can those Trinitarians condemn them, who make the incomprehensibility of a doctrine an objection against it ? I cannot conceive what object they have in view, who admit the Divinity, but deny the natural Sonship of our Saviour, unless it be to get rid of the strange notions about communication of essence and subordination which have prevailed so much ; and in this case, like too many disputants, in avoiding one extreme they run into another. Their opinion appears to me to be contrary to the plain and natural meaning of Scripture ; and I am disposed to maintain, with the Catholic church in all ages, that the Son was begotten by the Father before all worlds, or is the Son by necessary and eternal generation.

But, while on this point I hold the faith of the Church, I cannot assent to the common opinion, that the generation of the Son consisted in the communication of the Divine essence and perfections to him ; because, although the terms Father

and Son indicate a relation analogous to that among men, yet as, in the latter case, it is a relation between two material and separate beings, and in the former, is a relation in the same spiritual essence, the one can throw no light upon the other; and to attempt to illustrate the one by the other, is equally illogical and presumptuous. We can conceive the communication of a material essence by one material being to another, because it takes place in the generation of animals; but the communication of a spiritual, indivisible, immutable essence, is altogether inconceivable, especially when we add, that the supposed communication does not constitute a different being, but takes place in the essence communicating. I have often doubted whether those, who use this language, affix any idea to it. I suspect, that it is retained, partly in deference to the Fathers, who were not always the most accurate in their conceptions, and partly as a convenient mode of seeming to say something upon a subject which we do not understand. I must confess that, to me, it has always been unintelligible. Let us be content with the knowledge of the fact, and with the language of Scripture, which simply tells us, that the Son was begotten by the Father, but does not tell us how he was begotten. If we cannot explain how a plant grows, and an animal is formed, we can much less comprehend this mystery; and were we as modest and diffident as reflection upon our own ignorance should make us, we would regard every attempt to render the subject clearer than the Scriptures have made it, as a new proof that vain man would be wise, though he is born like the wild ass's colt.

To avoid the incomprehensible notion of the communication of essence, and its consequence in making the Son dependent upon the Father, as a stream is dependent upon the fountain which supplies it, some maintain, that the first person of the Trinity did not beget the second as God, but as Son; or did not beget the essence, but the person. This is another attempt to be wise above what is written. I can form no conception of their meaning; I know not what it is to beget a person, as distinct from his essence. It seems to me, that now we have passed from obscurity into the deepest shades of midnight.

The relation of the Holy Spirit, to the Father, according to the Greek Church, or to the Father and the Son, according to the Latin Church, is called *procession*. Although the term is different from generation, we cannot give the reason of the difference, because we do not understand what is meant by either the one or the other. It is called by the Greeks *εκπορευσις* and *εκπεμψις*. Those who think that generation implies the communication of essence, must attach a similar idea to procession. We are content to use the word without pretending to explain it. I shall have occasion to say something more on this subject, when I come to consider the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

We cannot be surprised that the doctrine of the Trinity, which appears to be inconsistent with the unity of God, and is so mysterious, should have met with opposition, and that various opinions should have been broached with a view to remove the difficulties with which it is attended, and to reconcile it to the dictates of human reason, which cannot understand how three can be one. In the second century, Praxeas taught, that there was no real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that the Father, sole Creator of all things, united to himself the human nature of Christ. His followers were called Monarchians, because they denied that there were more persons than one in the Godhead, and Patripassians, because, according to them, it was the Father who suffered on the cross. The same doctrine was taught, about the beginning of the third century, by Noetus; and with some variations, several years after, by Sabellius, an African bishop or presbyter, from whom this heresy has derived the name of Sabellianism. He maintained that God was one person only, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were different aspects or manifestations of the same Being. There was no real Trinity, but God was *τριωνυμος*, or had three names. He appeared as the Father at one time, as the Son at another, and as the Holy Ghost at another, as different occasions required. He was the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost as Sanctifier. Praxeas and Noetus affirmed that the Father united himself to the man Jesus Christ; but Sabellius held that an energy

or a portion of the Divine nature was communicated to him, and that the Holy Ghost also was a portion of the Father.

The next heresy opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity, is that of Arius and his followers, who acknowledged three distinct persons, but not three equal persons subsisting in one undivided essence. They rejected the word *ὁμοουσιος*, *consubstantial*, and would go no farther than to admit that the Son was *ὁμοιουσιος*, *of a like nature* to the Father. While they were not sparing in giving him high sounding titles to avoid public odium, and to impose upon the simple, they maintained that he was a creature, who owed his existence to the will and power of the Father; and they held the same sentiments respecting the Holy Spirit. Arius himself asserted, as Alexander his Bishop informs us, “that the Father was not always Father, but there was a time when he did not sustain this character; that the Logos did not always exist, but was made out of nothing; and that therefore there was a time when he was not,” *ἔτι καὶ ἦν ποτε, ὅτε οὐκ ἦν*. This system has undergone several modifications, but the most celebrated is that of Dr Clarke in his book on the Trinity. According to him, the Father alone is self-existent and independent, and to him the Scriptures refer when they speak of the one God, or God by way of eminence. The Son has existed with him from the beginning, but is not self-existent, because he derived his being and perfections from the Father. He derived them, too, not necessarily, but by an act of the will and power of the Father. The same account is given of the existence of the Holy Spirit. It is evident, that although he carefully avoids saying that the Son was made out of nothing, it follows from his system that he might not have existed; for, if he was begotten by the will of the Father, and yet not necessarily, the Father might not have willed his existence, and might have remained for ever alone. The difference between Dr Clarke, and those Trinitarians who explain generation by a communication of essence, is this, that they believe this generation or communication to have been necessary, and consequently, although agreeable to the will of the Father, yet not dependent upon it. Although Dr Clarke has not explicitly stated, whether or not he considered the essence of the Son and the Spirit to

be numerically the same with that of the Father, the train of his reasonings leads us to conclude, that he believed it to be different.

The last heresy opposed to this doctrine is Tritheism, or the doctrine of three Gods. Mention is made of it in the sixth century. It is ascribed to a person called John Ascusnaga, a Syrian philosopher; and it was supported by John Philoponus, a philosopher and grammarian of Alexandria. They imagined in the Deity, three natures or substances, equal in all respects, and therefore held in reality that there were three Gods. I find this doctrine revived, or at least proposed, as a theory well worthy of attention, in a *Calm and Sober Inquiry* concerning the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead, published anonymously in the end of the seventeenth century.* The substance of it is, that the three persons in the Godhead are three distinct uncreated Spirits mysteriously conjoined so as to be one. "There is a spiritual created Being," says the author, "an human soul confessed to be in hypostatical union with the uncreated Spiritual Being of God—in the person of the Son. Why shall it be thought less possible, that three uncreated Spiritual Beings may be in so near an union with each other as to be one God, as that a created spirit (and body too) should be in so near union with one of the persons in the Godhead only, as therewith to be one person? Will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible, how one of the persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be incarnate, and not the other two? Will not the notion of person itself be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its own individual nature? And why is a natural, eternal union of uncreated natures (with continuing distinction, or without confusion) sufficient unto the unity of the Godhead, less supposable than a temporal contracted union with a created nature (without confusion too) that shall be sufficient to the unity of a person? Will it be any thing more contrary to such simplicity of the Divine nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be Tritheism, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable unity of the Godhead?" It is unnecessary

* The Author was the celebrated non-conformist, John Howe. See the edition of his whole Works by Hunt, 1822, vol. iv.

to examine this passage; but it must be obvious to you all, that the charge of Tritheism, to which it is liable, is not repelled by asserting that the union is so close as to constitute the three natures, one; for three Divine natures, however intimately conjoined in counsel and operation, retain their individuality, and consequently are three Gods.

It would be tedious to enter into a minute detail of the objections to the doctrine of the Trinity, and to give answers to them. I shall content myself with adverting to two or three of a general nature.

First, the great argument of the opponents of this doctrine is, that it is inconsistent with the unity of God, which is so clearly taught in the Scriptures. But, while passages are collected which declare that God is one, it should not be forgotten that there are other passages which point out a plurality of persons, and in particular, give the name of God to the Son, and the Holy Spirit, without qualifying its meaning, and ascribe to them Divine perfections, and Divine works. Hence we are reduced to this alternative, either that the Scriptures contradict themselves, and therefore are not inspired, or that there is some mode of reconciling their different statements, that God is one, and yet is more than one. The only mode of reconciling them is the doctrine which has been illustrated; the doctrine of one Divine essence with personal distinctions. Deny it, and the Bible is one of the strangest books in the world, at perpetual variance with itself, establishing one thing in one page, and another thing in another, affirming and retracting with the same breath. Admit the doctrine in question, and the appearance of discordance vanishes; the Bible is a consistent, but mysterious, revelation of the incomprehensible JEHOVAH. If you ask what is the nexus, the connecting link of the two doctrines in question? I confess my utter inability to point it out, any farther than by saying that the essence is one; but I add, that my ignorance, or the ignorance of any other man, is not a proof that to harmonize them is impossible, till it is proved that his understanding, or mine, is the measure of truth, or that a thing cannot be unless we perceive how it is.

This leads me to a second objection against the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is contrary to reason; for what can be

more repugnant to its clearest dictates, than to affirm that the same Being is one and three ? This objection proceeds, in some cases, from a designed, and in others, from an unintentional, misrepresentation of the doctrine. If we should assert that God is one and three in the same respect ; that he has one nature and three natures, or one person and three persons, it would be impossible to utter a more palpable contradiction. But when we say that God is one in respect of his essence, but three in respect of some unknown distinction in his essence, I do not see that we can be justly charged with maintaining a contradictory proposition. There is but one God, because there is but one Divine essence ; but there may be three distinctions in his essence of which we can form no conception, and to which there is nothing analogous in our nature, or in that of any other creature. Some men do not hesitate to pronounce that this is impossible ; but I appeal to you—Who have reason on their side, those who determine what is, or is not, in God by their own ideas, or those who humbly think that the perfect knowledge of an infinite Being is too high for them ? As the eye has its prescribed range, and although adequate to the purposes of life, cannot discern objects in the moon and stars ; so reason is able to discover the existence of God, but was not intended to scrutinize the mysteries of his nature. To maintain that a doctrine is contrary to reason, because it is above it, is to forget its limited capacity ; it is to constitute it the standard of all truths, while it ought to judge of those alone to which its power is commensurate. It is to place God and man upon a level. What man can comprehend, God may possess, but nothing more ; no property, no act, no counsel, must be ascribed to him, which man had not previously conceived, or cannot now understand. We comprehend nothing, not the generation of an animal, the growth of a plant, the cohesion of a pebble ; and yet there are disputers who cavil at the Trinity, and other dogmas of revelation, because they are not shaped according to the rule and square of reason.

In the last place, it is objected that the doctrine of the Trinity is a speculative point, which has no influence upon practical religion, and is, therefore, unworthy of attention. This senseless cant we often hear in reference to several of

the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which, the ill-affected endeavour to bring into discredit, by representing them as useless. But, from those who so freely indulge in this style, we have a right to demand proof instead of confident assertions. Can they shew that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mere speculation? It serves one good purpose by reminding us of the weakness of our faculties, and thus promoting a spirit of humility. Here is a fact remote from human apprehension, at which reason is confounded, and yet it is true. It increases our reverence for God, as a Being infinitely exalted above our conceptions, to whom none can be compared in heaven or in earth, and the mode of whose existence is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. To these considerations it must be added, that, without the knowledge of this doctrine, it is impossible to understand the grandest of the works of God, Redemption, in which the three persons act distinct and conspicuous parts. We are called to contemplate the love of the Father, the condescension of the Son, and the gracious operations of the Spirit. Redemption is not the work of a solitary agent, but of three, all concurring in the salvation of our perishing race. Hence we owe gratitude to each of the persons of the Godhead distinctly, and are bound to give, to each, the glory to which he is entitled. We were baptized in their name, and consecrated to their service; and our prayers are addressed, not to God absolutely considered, but to the Father, through the Son, and by the assistance of the Holy Ghost. It appears, therefore, that the Christian system of duty is founded upon this doctrine, and that without the belief of it there can be no acceptable religion. So far is it from being useless, that it is the very foundation of practical piety. In a word, this doctrine furnishes an argument for union among the disciples of Christ. Reflecting that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are one in essence, one in love, one in counsel, one in working, how strongly are they incited to cultivate peace, and friendship, and brotherly communion! And then the prayer of their great Master will be answered, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." *

* John xvii. 21.

LECTURE XXX.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.—OBSERVATIONS ON THE GENERAL LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE RESPECTING CHRIST.—EVIDENCE OF HIS PRE-EXISTENCE.—HIS DIVINITY INFERRED FROM THE ASCRIPTION TO HIM OF THE TITLE, GOD; INSTANCES.

THE result of our observations on the doctrine of the Trinity, is that there are three persons in the one Divine essence, or that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory. The inference is so obvious as not to require to be pointed out to any person of common capacity, that each of them is truly and properly God; for it is evident from the oneness of their nature, that, in this respect, there can be no difference. If we have succeeded in the proof that a Trinity is revealed in the Scriptures, we might proceed without delay to other subjects; fully assured that he who redeemed us with his blood, and he who is the Author of our holiness and consolation, are not to be ranked among creatures, but are entitled to the same religious honour which, by the consent of all, is due to the Father. But there are various considerations which point out the propriety of suspending our progress, and engaging in a more minute inquiry into the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. The deity of our Saviour will be the subject of this and some other lectures; and I request your attention to the following preliminary remarks.

First, The divinity of Christ is a fundamental article of our

religion. No question which may come under our notice is of greater importance and interest than this, whether the Founder of Christianity is God or man, the Creator or a creature? It does not relate to a subordinate circumstance, but to the very essence of the religion, and the whole system is affected in whatsoever way it is decided. Those who believe Jesus Christ to be God, and those who maintain that he is only a human being, profess two religions totally different, as it were easy to show by a detail of particulars; they disagree in every thing, even in those articles which both verbally acknowledge, because they do not entertain the same views of them, and they hold them upon different grounds. The adversaries of his divinity are more allied to Jews and Mahometans, than to those who are usually denominated Christians; and to give them this name, is a misapplication of it equally gross as it would be to call him a Newtonian, who denied gravitation, or him a Cartesian, who laughed at the doctrine of vortices. Dr Priestley was highly offended at David Levi, the Jew, for telling him, that when he looked into the New Testament, he clearly saw that Jesus of Nazareth was represented there as God, and that, for this reason, he could not consider the Doctor as a Christian. But Levi was right, and the reply of Priestley, that every man is a Christian who acknowledges Jesus to be the Messiah, was feeble and ineffectual; for the Evangelists and Apostles teach that he was not only the Messiah, but the Son of the Living God.

Secondly, The divinity of Christ is a doctrine of great practical influence. Nothing is more common with some men, than to represent certain doctrines as speculative points, as subjects merely of curious and unprofitable inquiry, with a view to lessen our respect for them, and to prepare the way for the easy reception of the opposite errors. We might say to them, If they are only speculations, why are you so eager to refute them? Why do you not allow us quietly to hold our harmless belief? Their zeal betrays them, and shews that they regard these points as much more important than they find it expedient to confess. But, besides the irreverence and impiety of such language, when used in reference to any thing which is contained in revelation, it is obviously false,

although it may produce the intended effect upon such persons as suffer themselves to be imposed upon by confident assertion and vague declamation. No man can call the divinity of Christ a speculative point, who does not use words at random, without attending to their meaning, or whose understanding is raised but a few degrees above that of a child. If Jesus Christ was only a man, it may be our duty to remember his works with admiration, and his benevolent labours for the good of mankind with gratitude; but how feeble are these emotions, in comparison of the high and holy affections which will be excited by the belief of his Godhead! On the supposition that he is God, he is entitled to our supreme regard, to love not inferior in strength to that of which the Father is the object; we ought to repose unreserved and unshaken confidence upon him, committing to his care, for time and eternity, our bodies and our souls; we owe a respect to him which no prophet could claim, and are bound to receive his doctrines upon his own testimony, and to obey his commands solely in consideration of his authority. In a word, upon the question of his divinity it depends, whether we shall honour him with religious worship, or merely with civil respect; for nothing higher is due to the person of a created being, with whatever office he is invested, and with whatever qualifications he is furnished. To a Saviour who is God, we may offer up prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings; but if he is only a man, the worship which he has received from his followers in every age since the days of the Apostles is idolatry, and thousands of the best and holiest men whom the world ever saw, have gone down into the grave under the guilt of this damnable sin.

Lastly, the divinity of our Saviour is a controverted point; although admitted by the great body of Christians, it has been impugned by various individuals and sects. It would be tedious to enumerate the opinions respecting the person of Christ, which were propagated in the early ages of the Church. Truth is one, but error is infinite; for, having no fixed standard to regulate its conclusions, it runs into as many wild and fantastic forms as the imaginations and wayward reasonings of men of corrupt minds may devise. The heretics of former

times, disputed among themselves concerning the rank and dignity which ought to be assigned to Jesus Christ; but in one thing they all agreed, that he was inferior to the Father, and could be called God only in a subordinate sense. His divinity is still denied by the Jews, who have renounced the faith of their ancestors, and maintain, that as there is one God, so there is but one person in the Godhead. It is denied by Mahometans, who acknowledge him to be a prophet, but nothing more, inferring from the doctrine of the Unity, which they lay down as the fundamental article of their religion, that there is no distinction in the Divine Essence, and that God reigns without an equal or a Son. It is denied by those among ourselves who were formerly called Socinians, from Socinus the founder of their sect, one of the boldest blasphemers that ever appeared, but who now assume the name of Unitarians, to express the nature of their doctrine. It signifies believers in one God, and in this sense they mean it to be understood; but it is unjust and arrogant to appropriate this name to themselves, since they well know that, on this head, our creed is equally precise. Their design is to exhibit Trinitarians as holding a plurality of Gods, although the latter disavow the charge; and to persuade the world, that, of all Christians, they alone adhere to the first principle of natural and revealed religion. But we are all Unitarians, and assent to the truth solemnly inculcated upon the peculiar people, "Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH thy God is one JEHOVAH." The only condition on which we will agree to call the followers of Socinus exclusively Unitarians is, that the name shall be understood by all parties, to denote believers in only one person in the Godhead. The doctrine of those who lay claim to it is, that Jesus Christ was a mere man, the Son of Joseph and Mary, who was commissioned by God to teach morality, and to reveal clearly a future state, and that, having sealed his testimony with his blood, he rose from the grave to give us the hope of immortality. This is the sum of their Christianity; and as it differs little from what is called Natural Religion, it seems to be a matter of no importance whether a man be a Unitarian or an infidel. There is reason to suspect that this pernicious doctrine has spread beyond the boundaries of the

sect by which it is openly avowed ; that it has found its way into churches professedly orthodox, and is taught by unprincipled men, who have solemnly pledged themselves to preach a different faith. To these adversaries of our Saviour's Divinity I might add Arians, who allow that he is more than a man, but maintain, that he is a creature, notwithstanding the magnificent titles with which they honour him, and the high functions which they represent him as performing. This sect was once predominant, but it gradually declined, and is now almost extinct. It has still adherents, but they are few in number ; the greater part of those who had rejected the proper Deity of Christ, having sunk into the lowest depths of Socinianism.

In opposition to these heresies, we affirm that our Saviour is a Divine Person in the strict sense of the term ; that he is God by nature, and not merely by title or office ; that in the words of Paul, he is " God over all, blessed for ever." This proposition I shall endeavour to establish. As the Divinity of Christ is a doctrine of pure revelation, unassisted reason can give us no aid, and we must have recourse to the Scriptures for the only evidence by which it can be proved.

Before entering upon the direct proof of this most important truth, I would call your attention to the general language of the Scriptures concerning our Saviour, to which I formerly alluded in speaking of the Trinity. We have heard a Jew affirming, that the impression made upon himself and his brethren by reading the New Testament was, that Jesus is there represented, as not only greater than a man, but as a Divine Person ; and there is no doubt that every individual, who was not pre-occupied with the contrary idea, and thus prepared to explain away the strongest expressions, would rise from the perusal of it with the same conviction. This is virtually confessed by Unitarians, when they are at so much pains to soften terms and phrases, and to put a meaning upon them the most remote imaginable from the obvious import of the words ; for their elaborate criticism would be altogether unnecessary, if the sacred writings had not the appearance of teaching the doctrine, which they are so anxious to disprove. It is admitted that the Scriptures often describe our Redeemer as a man ;

and if this were all, there would be no controversy among Christians respecting his person ; but it is certain that they give names and titles, and ascribe attributes and operations to him, which are applied to the Supreme Being both in the Old and in the New Testament. Now we demand from our opponents a satisfactory account of this strange phenomenon. If the Evangelists and Apostles knew that he was a man like themselves, why have they indulged in descriptions of his character, calculated to create a very different idea ? It is vain to tell us of oriental idioms, and rhetorical figures ; because the question recurs, Why did they make use of such figures and idioms in composing books, which were designed to instruct the nations of the west as well as of the east ? They could not but be sensible, that such language was fitted to mislead ; why did they not avoid it ? Did they use words at random ? or were they careless of the effect ? Not to say that such a supposition sets aside their inspiration, it would farther prove them to have been totally incompetent for the task, which they undertook, of giving to the world the true history of Christ and his religion. One professed object of their writings and their preaching was to reclaim mankind from idolatry ; and was it the proper method of gaining this end, to talk of their Master in such a hyperbolical style, as was calculated to make men believe that he is a God, and has actually led thousands and millions into this error ; so that, if they have succeeded in abolishing one species of idolatry, by their unguarded manner of expressing themselves they have established another, and the Son of Mary has been, ever since, associated with the Creator of the Universe as the object of religious worship ? Unitarians have asserted, that the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was borrowed from the Platonic philosophy by some of the early Fathers, and introduced under their authority into the Church. But, instead of resorting to this foreign source, we can account for its adoption in a more simple and natural way. The Fathers themselves tell us that they derived it from the Scriptures, and appeal to them for the proof of it. No person can be at a loss to know where this doctrine, whether true or false, was found. If the immediate followers of our Saviour did not mean to teach it, they have been most unfortunate ;

for the great body of Christians for eighteen centuries have been fully persuaded that they have taught it ; and we ask, what other method they could have taken, what other terms they could have chosen, if it had been really their design to persuade us of his Deity ?

According to Unitarians, Jesus Christ was only a prophet. It is admitted that he was superior to Moses ; but Moses, it is acknowledged, was next to him, no individual in the long succession of prophets being worthy to be compared with the man by whose ministry the law was given to the Israelites ; and by that people he was held in the highest veneration. Yet, in reference to him no such language is used as is frequently applied to our Lord. He is never called the “ Son of God,” and “ God over all ;” he is never said to have “ created the world,” and to “ uphold all things by the word of his power.” Greatly as the Jews revered him, and zealous as they were for his honour, they would have accounted it blasphemy to speak of him in this manner. They never thought of deifying and worshipping him : they regarded him as the greatest of men, but still as merely a man. The reason is obvious. There is not a single sentence in his own writings, or in the other books of the Old Testament, which would lead them to entertain a more exalted idea of him. Why does the New Testament speak so differently ? Why does it elevate Jesus, not only above the prophets, to whom it is granted that he was superior, but above angels and all created beings ? Why does the style change, when he is the subject ? Is it possible to account for the new train of expressions, if he was only a man like Moses, although possessed of higher qualifications ? Will this difference, which does not affect his person or nature, justify the inspired writers in portraying him with the prerogatives and attributes of Godhead ? It is impossible that any person of judgment and candour can think so. We are unavoidably led to suspect that there is some more substantial reason. In short, we are compelled to come to this conclusion, either that the Evangelists and Apostles were fools who knew not what they were saying, or that they were verily persuaded that their Master, although a partaker of the same flesh and blood with themselves, possessed a superior nature, to which

all perfection belonged. They described him as God, because they believed him to be God ; and in this belief they could not be mistaken, because it was founded upon a long and intimate acquaintance with him, and upon information which they had received from himself.

These general observations upon the language of the New Testament, furnish at least, a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. The argument, indeed, is conclusive, if the authority of the Sacred writers be admitted in matters of this kind, and it appear that they give such an account of our Saviour, as can be true only on the hypothesis that he is God as well as man. Let us proceed to consider, more particularly, what is their testimony concerning him.

Unitarians maintain, that our Saviour began to be when he was born or was conceived in the womb of his mother, like another man, who prior to that period existed only in the elements of his being. But on looking into the Scriptures, we meet with many passages which obviously imply his pre-existence. I appeal to those texts which represent him as "having come down from heaven," "having come from above," "having come forth from the Father, and come into the world."* "To come into the world," simply denotes being born, and the phrase is used in reference to men in general ; but "to come forth from the Father, and come into the world," is different, and implies existence with the Father prior to his birth. Having been first with the Father, he afterwards entered into the habitation or the society of men, not by a change of place, but by the assumption of their nature. We would not tolerate such language from any other person, and should think the man insane who should say, I came forth from God, and am come into the world. It would be natural to ask, How were you with God before you were born ? The phrases *coming from above*, and *coming down from heaven*, are determinate ; they obviously import, that our Lord had his residence above, or in heaven, before he manifested himself in the flesh. It is acknowledged, that when blessings are said to come from above, nothing more is meant than that God is

* John iii. 13, 31 ; vi. 38 ; xvi. 28.

their Author ; and the reason of such phraseology is, that as the Scriptures always speak of a local heaven, it is natural to represent the gifts of his bounty as descending from it. But to say that a person came down from heaven, merely because he was a messenger from God, would be apt to mislead us by giving a false idea of his origin, and would not be conformable to the language of Scripture on similar occasions ; for we nowhere find the expression applied to the mission of any other person. It is not said that Moses, or Elijah, or the Baptist, came down from heaven. Since, then, Christ alone is spoken of in this manner, there must be a peculiar reason for it ; and what can it be but his prior existence ? He has himself settled the meaning by his words to the Jews, who were offended at his calling himself, the living bread that came down from heaven. “ What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ? ” * As we know that he really ascended to heaven, there can be no doubt that he really descended from it.

The pre-existence of our Saviour is evidently implied in the phrase “ to come in the flesh,” which we find in the first Epistle of John. † It is not simply expressive of his participation of human nature, but of his assumption of it. It signifies an act by which he became man, and necessarily supposes the possession of another nature by which that act was performed ; as, when it is said of a man that he came in state, or came in disguise, it is intimated that he was previously a living agent capable of choice. Let the same expression be used concerning any other person, and see what would follow. Were we told that some one had come in the flesh, preaching a new religion, we should immediately ask, what does this mean ? He has come in the flesh ; could he have come in any other way ? Was it in his power to come without flesh ? Might he have appeared as an angel ? Does it depend upon men themselves whether they shall be men, or beings of a different order ? These questions, which would be perfectly natural in any other case, are proper in the present ; and the only satisfactory answer to them is, that Jesus Christ did exist before his incarnation, and had power to take, or not to take, the

* John vi. 62.

† Chap. iv. 2, 3.

nature of man. It could not have been said, that he came in the flesh, if, like all other human beings, he had been made man without his consent and without his knowledge.

The next passage to which I shall direct your attention, is in the Gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word, *ὁ λόγος*, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." * The word *αρχη*, here translated *the beginning*, signifies the commencement of any period or series of actions; but here, I apprehend, it denotes *eternity*, because it appears from the context to have preceded the creation. In the same sense it is used in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, where wisdom says, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was;" † according to the Septuagint, *εν αρχη προ του την γην ποιησαι*. It is enough, however, for our present purpose, that the beginning is anterior to the appearance of our Saviour upon earth. That *he* is the *λόγος*, there can be no doubt with any person who reads the following verses, in which the *λόγος* is described as the true light to which John was sent to bear witness, and John was the forerunner of Christ. Unitarians, indeed, give us a view of the passage which would deprive us of an argument from it for the pre-existence of our Lord. According to them, "the beginning" is the commencement of his ministry. In this beginning, he was with God, that is, as the older Socinians said, he was taken up into heaven to be instructed in the will of God; or, as the moderns say, he withdrew from the world to converse with God in retirement. It ought to be observed that the Evangelist affirms, in a solemn manner, and repeats the affirmation, not only that the Word was with God, but that he was or existed; or, in other words, he affirms that Jesus Christ, the Author of the new dispensation, existed at the commencement of that dispensation. An important piece of intelligence truly! which we should not have known, if his beloved disciple and familiar friend had not been pleased to inform us, that Jesus Christ was in being when he began to preach. Can any man believe that an inspired Apostle was guilty of such trifling? Do Unitarian commentators believe it themselves? No; but this perversion of the sense serves

* Chap. i. 1, 2.

† Prov. viii. 23.

the purpose of supporting their favourite doctrine, that our Saviour did not exist till he was born.

Another passage in the Gospel of John is worthy of particular attention. Our Saviour had said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." They said unto him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He had not asserted that he had seen Abraham, or that Abraham had seen him, but only his day; but his hearers understood him to speak of co-existence with the patriarch; and as this interpretation of his words was just, he confirmed it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."* There is a striking peculiarity in these words, and an apparent violation of grammar, the present time being put before the past. The reason may be, that the Speaker, in his Divine nature, exists in a mysterious manner; that time is nothing to him, in whose sight a thousand years are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night; that in his permanent, unsuccessive duration, there is no distinction of past and future. Be this as it may, the words clearly import, that although our Lord was not fifty years old, and about two thousand years had elapsed since the death of Abraham, he might have seen, and had actually seen him, for he was in existence before the patriarch *was, was made, or was born*; for in all these ways the verb *γενεσθαι* has been translated, and any of them expresses its meaning. Strange methods have been employed to evade the evidence of this text. The elder Socinians gave this interpretation: "I am or exist before Abraham is made;" that is, before he, who was originally called Abram a high father, shall become truly Abraham the father of many nations, or before the calling of the Gentiles. Was this an answer to the objection of the Jews? Could it serve any purpose for Christ to affirm with emphasis of himself, what was equally true of every person who heard him? for they all existed before the gospel was preached to the nations of the world. Contemptible as this evasion is, Socinus tells us that his uncle Lælius obtained this view of the text from Christ himself by many prayers. Justly might one of his contemporaries say to

* John viii. 56—58.

him, that never in the course of his life had he met with a more perverted interpretation of Scripture. The modern Socinians give a different comment. 'Before Abraham was, I may be said to have existed as the Messiah, because I was appointed to this office by the Divine decree;' and they have the countenance of Grotius. It seems, then, that things may be said to exist thousands of years before they exist, because God has determined to bring them to pass. I may say that I existed before the flood, and we may all say that we existed from eternity; but it will be wise to refrain from such language, if we wish to escape the charge of folly or insanity. Again I ask, how was this answer to the purpose? What light did it throw upon the subject of discourse? How did it meet the inquiry of the Jews? What did our Lord affirm of himself, which was not true of every other prophet? But taking the words in their plain, natural meaning, they are an answer to the question, Hast thou seen Abraham? Yes, I have seen him, for I was before him.

I shall mention only one other passage: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* In this passage, our Lord speaks of glory in reference to the future and the past. He refers to the future, when he prays that his Father would now glorify him, that is, after his sufferings; he refers to the past, when he says that he had glory with the Father before the world began. The import of the prayer is, that his original glory might be manifested in a particular manner, or after a temporary obscuration. We have here an answer to an objection, that Christ cannot be conceived to pray for the same state of glory which, on the supposition of his pre-existence, he enjoyed before his humiliation, because it had never been lost. But it had been concealed from the eyes of men by his voluntary abasement, and it would be displayed in a new light, by his exaltation in our nature to the throne of the universe, and by the result of his administration in the perfection and eternal happiness of his people. Unitarians, and some others, have held that this, as well as the former passage, refers to the Divine decrees, and understand "the

* John xvii. 5.

glory which he had with the Father before the world was," to be the glory which the Father had purposed to confer upon him. But the same reasoning may be opposed to both interpretations. Things future are sometimes represented as present, particularly in the prophetic style ; but it is contrary to the laws of language, especially in a narrative of facts, to describe things present, or on the eve of accomplishment, as having taken place many ages before. How would it sound if a good man, who had the hope of immortality, should say, I was glorified in the presence of God, before I or any created being existed ? Let us not put words into the mouth of our Saviour, which would be extravagant and absurd if uttered by any other person.

The pre-existence of Christ is sufficiently established by the passages quoted ; and the Unitarian doctrine of his simple humanity is proved to be unscriptural. But more is necessary to demonstrate his Divinity. Arians allow that he existed before his manifestation in human nature, but they do not admit that he is God in the proper sense of the term. The doctrine of the founder of the sect was, that there was a time when Christ was not, and that he was created before all worlds. They have this advantage, that they are not under the necessity of explaining away, by dishonest criticism, many passages which press upon the Unitarian system. They can understand literally those texts which we have considered, and say without equivocation or mental reservation, that Christ was with God in the beginning, and had glory with him before the foundation of the world ; that he existed before Abraham ; that he came down from heaven, and came in the flesh. Those things, which are affirmed of him, are strictly true according to their system, which is more plausible than that of Socinians, and thus far agrees with the plain meaning of Scripture. It is therefore surprising that so many of its friends should have abandoned it, and adopted the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, which is embarrassed with so many additional difficulties. An Arian can not only go along with the Scriptures, when they assert that our Lord existed before his incarnation, but can give him the high titles which he receives, and ascribe to him the mighty works which are there represented as having

been performed by him. He does not hesitate to say that the Son created the world, and appeared to the patriarchs, and governed the Church under the old dispensation; nor to call him the image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He can use such language with a nearer approximation to the truth than a Socinian, who is compelled to fritter it away into mere inanity; to reduce the pompous display of metaphors and similes into humble and creeping sense. Yet the distance between us and Arians is immense. This Being, whom they portray in such magnificent terms, is a creature superior to angels, but alike indebted for his existence to the will and power of the Almighty, a God not by nature, but by office. In the following discussion, therefore, we shall have to contend with them as well as with Unitarians, while we endeavour to prove, in opposition to both, that Jesus Christ is truly and properly a Divine Person, a partaker of the same nature with the Father, and possessed of all his perfections.

In prosecuting this design, I might go over the Scriptures in regular order, selecting such information as they supply with respect to his personal dignity. It would not be necessary to confine your attention to the New Testament, because the Old is a part of the same revelation, and amidst its notices and predictions may be expected to give us some knowledge of his character, as well as of the work which he had undertaken to accomplish. But this method would be tedious, and would require more time than can be allotted to this department of our course. There is a classification of the proofs which we may commodiously adopt, because it is a comprehensive one, and, arranging them under distinct heads, leads the mind, by a clear and successive induction, to the conclusion. Jesus Christ is proved to be God equal to the Father, by the ascription of the same names, and perfections, and works, and worship to him.

In the first place, Let us attend to the Divine names which are given to him in the Scriptures. That he is called, God, is so well known, that it is almost superfluous to produce partic-

ular passages. Now, it is acknowledged, that the name is sometimes given to creatures, to magistrates and angels; and Moses is said to have been a god to Pharaoh.* In the latter case, the meaning evidently is that Moses was in the room of God to Pharaoh, delivered God's commands to him, and denounced his judgments. The name, as we shall see, is used concerning Christ in a quite different manner. It may be observed, that when creatures are called gods, we are led to a figurative sense, not only by the plural number—which shews that their real divinity cannot be meant, because it is a fundamental doctrine of religion that there is only one—but by some adjunct or circumstance which qualifies the term; whereas in its application to our Saviour, the laws of just reasoning require it to be literally understood. If it is said to earthly princes, “Ye are gods,” it is added in the same breath, “but ye shall die like men;” † and when angels are addressed as gods, they are at the same time commanded to acknowledge their inferiority by worshipping the first-begotten of the Father; ‡ but the Godhead of our Saviour is expressed in such terms, and associated with such attributes and operations, as demonstrate it to be absolute.

“The Word was God.” || *He was made a God*, say the Socinians; but the deification of a creature is a notion which receives no countenance from Scripture, and it may be pronounced to be impossible. How was it done? Was a divine nature given to him? or were divine perfections communicated to him? Not a word of these things is to be found in the Bible, and either supposition is grossly absurd. How could a man be changed into a God? or how could a limited nature be endowed with omniscience and omnipotence? Modern Socinians translate the passage thus, *The Word was a God*; but how strange is it to the ears of Christians to speak of more Gods than one, as if, like the heathens, we had subordinate deities! No; they say, our meaning is that he is a figurative god, like magistrates and Moses. But besides that, in the following verses, the Evangelist ascribes to him a work which is peculiar to the true God, namely, the creation of

* Exod. vii. 1. † Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7. ‡ Compare Ps. xcvi. 7. with Heb. i. 6.
|| John i. 1.

all things,* the original does not admit of this translation. *Θεος*, they reply, is without the article, and ought therefore to be rendered *a God*. But here the idiom of the Greek language is violated, and scholars know, that while the subject of a proposition admits, the predicate rejects, the article, and that the proposition, “The Word was God,” could have been expressed only as it is, *Θεος ην ὁ λογος*. It is evident, that although *Θεος* stands first in order, it is the predicate of the sentence, and denotes what *ὁ λογος*, the subject, is. This criticism, then, proves only the ignorance of those who have made it.

“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”† To evade the evidence of this text, Unitarians tell us that it may be translated, “God is thy throne;” because the words rendered *O God*, are not *ω Θεε*, in the vocative, but *ὁ Θεος*, in the nominative. They ought to have remembered, that this is a Greek idiom, and that in the Attic dialect, the nominative is frequently put for the vocative. God is said to be a shield, a rock, and a fortress to his people, and as in these cases it is signified that he protects and defends them, there is nothing inconsistent with his dignity and supremacy. “But it is the reverse in the case before us. A throne,” it has been justly remarked, “derives its dignity from the character and dominion of the sovereign who sits upon it. To call the Eternal Majesty the throne of a creature,” as the Messiah is supposed to be, “seems little suitable to the reverence which is ever to be maintained towards the Creator, and which is one of the most distinguishing characters of the Scripture style.”‡ The design of the Apostle, in quoting these words of the Psalmist, is to prove the superiority of Christ to the heavenly messengers. He begins well, by shewing that God makes the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers, thus reducing angels to the condition of servants; but he does not end well, if he say only that God is the throne of Christ, or the support of his authority. Where is the contrast? If he has given power to our Saviour, and upholds him in the exercise of it, he has done the same thing to angels and other ministers of his will; and how

* John i. 3.

† Heb. i. 8.

‡ Dr Pye Smith's Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, Book ii. c. 4. § 14.

does his pre-eminence appear? If we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," the point is decided, for he is God, and they are creatures; but the new translation destroys the force of the argument, and must therefore be false. The ancient versions agree with ours; and as far as I know, the new translation was not thought of till modern times, when arguments against the divinity of Christ were eagerly sought and collected from every quarter. We may rest satisfied that this is another passage, in which our Saviour is called, God, in the proper sense of the term.

The Apostle Paul, when enumerating the privileges and honours of the Jews, thus expresses the last and greatest of them:—"And of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen."* This single passage furnishes a decisive answer to the question respecting the divinity of our Saviour. The adversaries of this doctrine, fully aware that it is fatal to their system, have tried every possible method of destroying its force. "Of whom Christ came," ὁ ὡν ἐπὶ παντῶν θεός. 'Ο ὡν connects θεός with Χριστός, and is used for ὅς ἐστι. To evade this evidence that he is God, they have proposed a different reading, 'ὡν ὁ—*of whom*, namely, the Jews, *is God over all*; that is, he is their God. But besides that, if this were the genuine reading, the article must, by the laws of the language, have been prefixed to εὐλογητός, ('ὡν ὁ ἐπὶ παντῶν θεός ὁ εὐλογητός) which it is not; the alteration is made without the authority of a single manuscript, in order to silence the testimony of Scripture in favour of a particular doctrine. It is a mere conjecture, which Griesbach has mentioned among his various readings, while it would have been more worthy of him to have passed it over with contempt. We have said more than enough of it, and proceed to another attempt to annihilate the evidence, by converting the words into a doxology; as if the Apostle, while reviewing the instances of divine goodness to his nation, had felt the spirit of devotion arise, and burst forth into an expression of praise, "God over all be blessed for ever!" It is an overwhelming objection, that the words cannot be so translated without a violation of the idiom of the language. In

* Rom. ix. 5.

all the doxologies where *εὐλογητός* occurs in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, (and more than forty instances have been observed,) it is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If, then, Paul had intended a doxology, he would have said, *εὐλογητός ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*. As he has placed the words in a different order, they are plainly and necessarily an affirmation concerning the person last spoken of, namely Christ, who is pronounced to be God. And you will observe, that there is no room for the pretext which is employed in other places, that he may be called God in a figurative and subordinate sense; because he is denominated *ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ πάντων*, the Supreme God, or the Most High God over all the earth. That he may and ought to be so designated, will be readily admitted by those who believe, and entertain just notions of, the Trinity; for if the nature is the same, the persons must be equal, and one of them cannot be greater than another.

When Jesus shewed the wounds in his hands and his feet, Thomas said unto him, "My Lord, and my God." * We are told that this was merely a sudden expression of surprise and admiration. But to use the name of God on such occasions is profane; it is the practice of irreligious men, and would not have been imitated by a follower of Christ in the presence of his Master; or if he had inadvertently fallen into it, he would not have passed without reprehension. We have no evidence from the Scriptures that the Jews indulged in such exclamations, although they are too common among Christians. It has been said again, that they are an ejaculation addressed to the Father, "My Lord, and my God, how great is thy power!" or, "My Lord and my God has done this." We need only reply, that according to the Evangelist the words were not addressed to the Father, but to Christ, "Thomas said unto him," &c. It follows that Christ was acknowledged by Thomas as his Lord and his God; and surely if he had been in an error, his Master would have set him right.

Besides the passages which have been quoted, there are several others in which the name of God is given to our Sa-

* John xx. 28.

viour, but the evidence does not appear to common readers, in consequence of the manner in which they have been translated. It is a rule laid down by some late critics, that when two or more personal or attributive nouns, joined by a copulative or copulatives, are assumed of the same person or thing, before the first attributive the article is inserted, before the remaining ones it is omitted. It follows, that when two or more attributives occur with the article prefixed only to the first, they ought to be understood as referring to the same individual. For example, if we find Χριστος and Θεος coupled by the conjunction και, and ὁ before Χριστος, but not repeated before Θεος, we must not explain them as referring to two persons but to one, and as asserting that he who is Christ, is also God. This canon has been established by examples from the classics, from the New Testament, and from the Fathers; so that we are fully authorised to apply it for the correction of some passages, in which, in consequence of not attending to it, our translators have misrepresented the sense. Dr Wordsworth, who has examined the subject with great care, says, “ I have observed more, I am persuaded, than a thousand instances of the form ὁ Χριστος και Θεος, some hundreds of instances of ὁ μεγας Θεος και σωτηρ, and not fewer than several thousands of the form ὁ Θεος και σωτηρ; while in no single case have I seen, where the sense could be determined, any one of them used but only of one person.” * The Fathers are good authority, as they certainly were acquainted with the idiom of their own language. When the same phrases, therefore, occur in the New Testament, we are bound to understand them as they were understood by the Greeks. On this ground we beg leave to differ from the received version in some texts, and to give a translation more conformable to the original:—“ Looking for the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” † ought to be, *the appearing of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ*; του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτηρος ἡμων Ιησου Χριστου. “ That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ,” ‡

* Six Letters to Mr Granville Sharp, p. 36, &c.

† Titus ii. 13.

‡ 2 Thess. i. 12.

should be rendered, *according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ*; του Θεου ἡμῶν καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. “No whoremonger—hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,” * *in the kingdom of the Christ and God*; ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ. “I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,” † *before the God and Lord Jesus Christ*; ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. “Through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” ‡ *through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*; τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. “Un-
godly men, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” || *denying Jesus Christ the only Lord and our Lord*; τὸν μόνον ὀεσποτὴν καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

Enough has been said to prove that, according to the New Testament, Christ is God in the true and proper sense of the word. But this is not the only name expressive of his divinity, and in the next Lecture I shall shew that he is also called JEHOVAH.

* Eph. v. 5.

† 1 Tim. v. 21.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 1.

|| Jude 4. The word Θεοῦ, *God*, in our translation of this last verse, is omitted by late critics.

LECTURE XXXI.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST INFERRED FROM THE ASCRIPTION TO HIM OF THE TITLE JEHOVAH; INSTANCES.—INFERRED FROM THE ASCRIPTION TO HIM OF DIVINE PERFECTIONS; AS ETERNITY, OMNIPRESENCE, OMNISCIENCE, IMMUTABILITY, AND OMNIPOTENCE.—INFERRED FROM THE ASCRIPTION TO HIM OF DIVINE WORKS; INSTANCES.

I PROCEED to another name which is given to our Saviour. God revealed himself to his ancient people by the name JEHOVAH, derived from the verb *יהוה*, *to be* or *to subsist*, and therefore signifying *Ens, Existens ab æterno et in æternum*, or the self-existent and eternal Being. Its import shews that it cannot be given to a creature, but is appropriated to God; and accordingly he makes an exclusive claim to it in Scripture. As the name of a man distinguishes him from all other men, so the name, JEHOVAH, distinguishes the Most High from all other beings. “Seek ye him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; JEHOVAH is his name.”* The Psalmist says, “That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most High over all the earth.”† These passages are instances of the exclusive ascription of this name to the Creator and Governor of the universe, and prove that it is peculiar to him. I shall, however, add one quotation more, in which he takes it to himself,

* Amos v. 8.

† Ps. lxxxiii. 18.

with a solemn declaration that he will not give it, and consequently that it ought not to be given, to any other: "I am JEHOVAH; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."* It implies something in which no other can share: the glory of underived and independent existence belongs to no man or angel.

Now, the argument which we found upon these passages is this, that if this name is given to Jesus Christ, he is not a created or a nominal God, but a divine person, distinct, it is acknowledged, from the Father, but united with him in the same self-existent essence. It is objected, that there are several instances in which this name is given to a creature. To mention one, he who appeared to Moses in the burning bush is called JEHOVAH, and yet is said to have been an Angel. But before this passage can be fairly alleged against us, it must be proved that he was a created angel, contrary to the belief of the Church in all ages, that this was the same person who was afterwards manifested in human nature as the Messenger of God, and was then the Guide and Guardian of the peculiar people. It is objected, that Moses called an altar which he had erected JEHOVAH-nissi, *my banner*; † and that, when the ark was taken up to be removed to another place, he addressed it in these words, "Rise up, JEHOVAH, and let thine enemies be scattered;" when it rested again, he said, "Return, O JEHOVAH, unto the many thousands of Israel." ‡ But these passages are cited to no purpose, because it will immediately appear, that they are not parallel to those in which our Saviour is described as JEHOVAH. It is evident that inanimate objects could be so called only in a figurative sense, and could be considered in no other light than as memorials of him after whom they are denominated. The altar was not JEHOVAH, but was dedicated to his honour; the ark was merely a symbol of his presence; and Moses addressed his words not to it, but to Him who appeared above it, between the cherubim. We give the same account of the passage in Ezekiel, which says, "The name of the city from that day shall be, JEHOVAH is there:" || of which the meaning obviously is, that the city shall be the residence of

* Isaiah xlii. 8. † Exod. xvii. 15. ‡ Numb. x. 35, 36. || Ezek. xlvi. 35.

JEHOVAH, who will manifest his presence in it by the operations of his power and grace. The application of the name to our Saviour suggests totally different ideas. He is a living person, and is throughout the Scriptures represented as possessing the attributes, and performing the works, of God ; and hence we are authorised to consider it as applied to him in the true and literal sense of the term. If it is proved that he is God, because he is called God, it will be proved that he is JEHOVAH, if it is found that he is called JEHOVAH without a figure.

In the sixth chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah, we have an account of a vision in which he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and heard the seraphim adoring him:—"Holy, holy, holy is JEHOVAH of Hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory." * If we turn to the twelfth chapter of John, we shall find him quoting the words which JEHOVAH addressed to the prophet on the occasion, and then adding, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." † Whose glory did he see ? Christ is the subject of the Evangelist's discourse, and to him only can the pronoun refer. Isaiah therefore saw the glory of Christ, when he saw JEHOVAH in the temple ; he saw it, not with the eye of his mind, contemplating future scenes, but with his bodily eyes. Is it not then certain, that Christ is JEHOVAH ?

Isaiah xl. 3.—"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Hear what an Evangelist says: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea."—"For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." ‡ To these verses we may join the words of the angel to Zacharias concerning his promised son : "He shall go before him," the Lord God of the children of Israel, "in the spirit and power of Elias, to—make ready a people prepared for the Lord." || We see the prophecy, and we see its fulfilment. "The voice crying in the wilderness" was the voice of the Baptist ; "the way of JEHOVAH" was prepared by his

* Isaiah vi. 3. † John xii. 41. ‡ Matt. iii. 1, 3. || Luke i. 17.

ministrations, while he excited, in the minds of the people, an expectation of the appearance of the Messiah; and consequently the Messiah is JEHOVAH. The inference is so obvious, that all evasion is vain.

Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH our Righteousness." It is admitted by Jews and Christians that this is a prediction of the Messiah. Some read, *this is the name which Jehovah shall call him, our Righteousness*; but the most distinguished interpreters contend for our translation; and so it seems to have been understood by the author of the Greek version, who, however, has not given the sense of the two Hebrew words יהוה צדקתו, but has joined them together as belonging to the same person, και τουτο το ονομα ο καλεσει αυτον κυριος Ιωσεδεκ. The corresponding passage in chap. xxxiii. 16. is wanting in the Vatican and Alexandrine manuscripts of the Septuagint, but is found in some others, thus: Τουτο εστι το ονομα ο κληθησεται Κυριος δικαιοσυνη ημων. It is objected that, in this latter passage, the name is given to Jerusalem. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, JEHOVAH our righteousness." But the words have been rendered, *this is he who shall call to her, Jehovah our righteousness*. The word *name* is not in the original Hebrew. It is supposed by some critics, that the passage has sustained an alteration, and that it was originally the same as in the twenty-third chapter, and as it is found in several manuscripts. There is little reason to doubt that the Messiah is here announced as JEHOVAH, and as our Righteousness, in allusion to the inestimable benefit resulting to us from his mediation. "He brought in an everlasting righteousness," and "of God is made to us righteousness."

Isaiah viii. 13, 14. "Sanctify JEHOVAH of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." But these words

are applied to Christ in the 8th verse of the second chapter of the first Epistle of Peter.—Isaiah xlv. 21—23. “Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I JEHOVAH?—I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” When we find an apostle representing it as the design of the exaltation of Christ, that every knee should bow at his name, and every tongue confess that he is Lord;* and quoting this passage as a proof that we shall all appear before his judgment seat,† can we doubt that he was considered by Paul as the JEHOVAH who speaks in the writings of the prophets?—Zechariah xii. 10. In the preceding context, the speaker is JEHOVAH, and he says, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” The last words are quoted by the Evangelist John on the occasion of our Saviour’s side being pierced with a spear.‡ But JEHOVAH declares that it was he who was treated in this manner. How could this be, since the Divine nature is impassible? The words are intelligible upon our hypothesis, and upon no other, that he, who suffered on the cross, was greater than he seemed to be, was the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary, the eternal and living One, and a man of flesh and blood.

These passages are sufficient to shew that our Saviour receives the name of JEHOVAH; and as God appropriates it to himself, and declares that he will not give it to another, it follows, that although he was born in Bethlehem, and died on Calvary, he is fitly described by the name which is expressive of eternal and independent existence.

In the second place, We prove the Divinity of Christ from the ascription of divine perfections to Him. We know nothing of any being but by its properties. What matter and spirit are, we cannot tell; but there are certain qualities by which they are distinguished, and when we discover those of the one class or the other, we pronounce that the subject, in

* Phil. ii. 9—11.

† Rom. xiv. 11, 12.

‡ John xix. 37.

which they inhere, is matter or spirit. Properties are inseparable from essences. A stone does not think, nor is a mind tangible and divisible. Sensation, motion, and instincts distinguish the inferior animals; reason is characteristic of man; and ascending to the highest Being in the universe, we conceive him to possess perfections, of which there are either no traces in his creatures, or only faint lineaments which preclude all comparison, and place them at an immeasurable distance from him. Infinite as they are, they could not exist in a finite nature; for it would be an express contradiction to suppose a being to be limited and unlimited; to be bounded in essence, but unbounded in energies; to be confined to a portion of space, and yet to operate throughout all space. If, then, we find that divine properties are ascribed to any person, by authority which proves that they do actually belong to him, we must believe that his nature is divine. Absolute eternity, immensity, omniscience, and omnipotence, are incompatible with the idea of a creature.

First, Eternity is ascribed to Christ, by which I mean, not merely an existence which will have no end, for in this sense angels and human spirits are eternal, but an existence which had no beginning. He is said to have been "in the beginning with God," that is, as the Evangelist explains himself, "before any thing was made;" "to have been before all things," and "to have had glory with the Father before the world was."* It may be objected, that these expressions prove only his pre-existence, and that he might have been created before all worlds, as Arians believe. But, to affirm of any person that he existed before any thing was made, is to exempt him from the number of creatures; and, if there had been no prejudice in the way, would have been universally so understood. If, however, our antagonists demand something more explicit, I would remind them that, in his first Epistle, John calls him "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested" to the world;† pretty plainly signifying, that before his incarnation he possessed an eternal existence. In the Book of Revelation, he says of himself, "I am the First, and the Last, and the Living One." "I am the Alpha and the

* John i. 2, and xvii. 5.

† 1 John i. 2.

Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” * The same idea is here thrice repeated in different terms, and this, added to the solemnity of the language, unavoidably leads us to regard it as an important one. I cannot conceive how any man could persuade himself, that such language might be used of a creature. It does not admit of being explained as signifying any thing less than an eternal duration; and God applies it to himself in the Old Testament: “Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I JEHOVAH, the First, and with the Last; I am he.” “I am the First, and I am the Last, and besides me there is no God.” “I am he; I am the First, I also am the Last.” † There is another passage in the Revelation, the application of which has been disputed, but in which there is reason to think that Christ is the speaker. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord,” or, according to Griesbach’s corrected text, “*the Lord God*, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” ‡ In the preceding verse, Christ is expressly mentioned; and after the two next verses, he announces himself in the same words: “I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.” If he is a different being from the Lord God, why does he immediately assume his style? Would it have been dutiful and reverent to proclaim himself by the titles under which the Creator had revealed himself a moment before? At any rate, if the speakers are different, they are both possessed of the absolute eternity which the titles denote.—The last passage which I shall produce is in Micah: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.” || An existence which should commence in time, and an existence which had no beginning, are both ascribed to the Messiah. To assert that his goings forth were from everlasting, because God had made an eternal decree concerning him, (in respect of which there was no difference between him and every other Bethlehemite), is so gross a perversion,

* Rev. i. 17, 18, and xxii. 13.

† Isaiah xli. 4. xlv. 6. xlviii. 12.

‡ Rev. i. 8.

|| Micah v. 2.

that it is unworthy of farther attention. “ Though the two principal terms,” (עולם and קרם), says Dr Smith, “ taken separately, are occasionally used to denote a limited (yet to present and human apprehensions, a very long and hidden) period ; the proper and usual meaning of each is a REAL ETERNITY ; each occurs in passages evidently intended to be the most solemn assertions of Infinite Duration, and the combination of the two furnishes the strongest expressions for that purpose, of which the Hebrew language is capable.” *

In the second place, Another divine perfection which is ascribed to Jesus Christ, is omnipresence. I need not say that this is a perfection peculiar to God, and of which there is not even a shadow in any creature, because it implies immensity of nature. “ Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off ? Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the Lord.” † We cannot remove from his presence ; but whether we ascend to heaven, or descend into hell, or fly on the wings of the morning to the ends of the earth, he is there to meet us. Now, let us observe whether any thing is said in Scripture concerning our Lord, which implies the possession of this perfection ; and as there can be no doubt among Christians that he knows his own nature, and is the faithful and true Witness, I shall lay before you his own words. “ No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” ‡ The meaning of the first part of this verse has been differently explained, not being quite obvious, because it refers to an ascension to heaven as a past event. He had said to Nicodemus, who was astonished at the doctrine of the new birth, “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things ?” || He adds, that he only was qualified to give information concerning these things, for no man, but himself, had been in heaven to acquire the knowledge of them, by immediate intercourse with God. It is not affirmed that he had ascended to heaven, but

* Scripture Testimony, B. ii. chap. 4. sect. 27.

† Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

‡ John iii. 13.

|| Ib. v. 11, 12.

that no other man had. Unitarians give a figurative meaning to the whole verse, and express it thus: "No one has ever been admitted to a participation of the Divine counsels, except the Son of man, Jesus of Nazareth, who has been commissioned to reveal the will of God to man, and is perfectly instructed and qualified for this purpose." But what strange language do they put into the mouth of our Lord; language calculated to mislead, while it would have been equally easy to express the matter plainly, and much better, as all danger of mistake would have been prevented. He who has no end to serve by perverting the words, will acknowledge that they teach a literal descent from heaven, and, what is more directly to our purpose, his presence in heaven at the time when he was addressing Nicodemus: "The Son of man who *is*" not who *was* "in heaven." He had descended from it, economically, by assuming our nature; but he had not left it in respect of his essence. He had another nature besides that which was visible, a nature which was not confined to one place. By declaring that he was on earth and in heaven at the same time, he assumed that Divine perfection which is expressed in the words formerly quoted: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" The evidence of this passage presses hard upon the opponents of his Divinity; and Dr Priestley was driven to his last shift, when he ventured to express a suspicion, that either John's amanuensis mistook what he dictated, or that John himself, being old when he wrote his Gospel, had forgotten what his Master said. Surely the man must have spoken against the conviction of his own mind.

Our Lord promised, that "where two or three were gathered together in his name, he would be in the midst of them."* It is an arbitrary assumption, that this promise was confined to the Apostolic age, as there is the same reason for the presence of Christ with his people, in all ages of the world. To say, that he would be present with them in spirit, as Paul was with the Corinthians, or would be present with them by his authority delegated to them, is to put a sense upon the words which they would never suggest to an honest man, who had no object but to ascertain their real meaning. Unitarians speak of a

* Matth. xviii. 20.

corporeal presence of Christ with his followers, and appeal to the case of Stephen, who saw him at his death, and of Paul, to whom he appeared in the way to Damascus. Granting that there was a bodily presence of our Saviour on those occasions, we ask for proof that the first Christians, to whom they would restrict this privilege, were always favoured with it in their religious assemblies. We say that this was impossible. How could he be present at the same time, in a thousand congregations, held in Judea, in Asia Minor, in Greece, and in Italy? If he was in one, he could not be in another; but he promised to be in the midst of them all. Do Unitarians believe, with Lutherans, the ubiquity of his human nature, or, with Papists, the doctrine of transubstantiation? Our Lord promised to be in the midst of his disciples in the same sense in which God was in the midst of his ancient people, namely, by a real but invisible presence. Once more, when he gave his Apostles a commission to teach and baptize all nations, he said, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"* *ὡς τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος*. Some translate, *to the end of the age*, or the end of the Jewish dispensation. It is certain, however, that the phrase occurs where it must signify the end of the world, and I can see no good reason for giving it here a different sense. In particular, I am at a loss to conceive what Unitarians would gain by the new version, and their efforts to establish it are a waste of criticism; for if, according to their hypothesis, Christ could be with his disciples to the end of that age, he could as well be with them to the end of the world; and we may, with perfect safety, admit the one interpretation as well as the other. But the truth is, that if he had been a mere man, he could not have performed his promise even for a short period, as we have shewn above; and it is a mere imagination to think that the difficulty is lessened, by abbreviating the time. How could Christ, if he was not a Divine person, be present with his followers in all places of the world, in the plain import of the promise? It would have availed them little that they had his authority and approbation, or even that he knew what they were doing, if he had not been near to direct, assist, and defend them.

* Matth. xxviii. 20.

In the third place, The Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is omniscient. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” * We may remark by the way, that there must be something peculiar about the Son, something which distinguishes him from all other persons, since he is known, fully understood, and comprehended only by the Father. But what is to be observed in those verses for our present purpose is, that the knowledge of the Son by the Father, and of the Father by the Son, are commensurate, that is, the Son as thoroughly knows the Father, as the Father knows the Son. There is no distinction of degrees, but the one knowledge is as perfect as the other. It may be objected, that others are represented as knowing the Father, and therefore, that the knowledge of the Son is not necessarily perfect more than theirs, although it may be granted to be superior. But observe this difference, that the knowledge which they possess is communicated by his revelation; whereas his knowledge is not revealed to him, but is natural and underived, like that of the Father. As the latter knows the Son, so the Son knows the Father by intuition. Knowledge is in him, as water is in a lake or reservoir; but is in others, as water in a stream, inferior in quantity as well as dependent upon the source. The simple consideration, that their knowledge is secondary, sets aside the idea of equality. *He* has such knowledge of the Father as the Father has of him; *they* have such knowledge of the Father as the Son is pleased to communicate.—“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, on the feast-day, many believed on his name when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them,” or placed no confidence in them; and for what reason? Had they exhibited any external evidence of insincerity? Had they, by word or deed, given him any ground to suspect them? The Evangelist lets fall no hint of this kind; but adds, “because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.” † The persons spoken of were struck by his miracles, and acknowledged him to be the Messiah. Any

* Matth. xi. 27.

† John ii. 23—25.

other man would have been satisfied with their profession ; but he was not, because he was acquainted with their sentiments and feelings, and knew that nothing more had been produced by his miracles than a transient impression. It is plainly affirmed that he saw their hearts, although they were concealed from other eyes by fallacious signs ; that he saw the hearts not of those alone, but of all men ; and that his knowledge was immediate and intuitive. He needed no testimony, but knew in himself. Is not this the knowledge of God ? knowledge which he claims exclusively to himself. “ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” * In accordance with the words of the Evangelist are those of our Saviour himself in the book of Revelation. “ All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to his works.” † It is worthy of attention, that, with a slight alteration, these are the words of God which have just been quoted from Jeremiah.—“ Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me ? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” ‡ An attempt has been made to prove that these words do not imply omniscience, because John says to Christians in general, “ Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” || But expressions are to be explained by the connexion. The Apostle in this latter passage is speaking of false teachers, antichrists as he calls them, who were endeavouring to draw away the disciples from the faith ; and he consoles them by the consideration that they had received an anointing, the influences of the Holy Spirit, to enable them to distinguish between truth and error, to know all the subjects in dispute, or all the essential doctrines of religion. It is perfectly evident that the universal phrase, *all things*, must be so limited. But Peter, in his reply to Christ, refers, not to the knowledge of doctrines or actions, but to the knowledge of the heart. Jesus had

* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. † Rev. ii. 23. ‡ John xx. 17. || 1 John ii. 20.

thrice asked whether Peter loved him. The repetition of the question after it had been answered in the affirmative, seemed to imply a doubt of his sincerity, and he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." 'Why dost thou put the question so often? There is nothing concealed from thee, not even the secrets of the heart. Thou needest not to be told that my affection to thee is genuine.' This is plainly to ascribe omniscience to Christ, who was so far from correcting the Apostle, as he would have done if he had deified him being only a man, that he gave a virtual sanction to what he had said, by subjoining, "Feed my sheep."

Farther, Immutability is ascribed to him, which is a divine attribute incommunicable to a creature. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," * or the same in all ages, past, present, and to come. This proposition was intended, as appears from the context, either to excite the Hebrews to imitate the conduct of their rulers who had died in the Lord, by an assurance of the same happy result to themselves, founded on the unfailing love and power of the Redeemer; or to engage them to constancy in the faith, because the Author of the Gospel is unchangeable in his authority to command, and in his ability to protect and reward. Whatever is the connexion, it is solemnly asserted that he is a person, of whom perpetual identity of nature and character may be predicated. If he is only a man, it is impossible to conceive with what propriety these things are spoken of him. His history is full of changes. Not only did he pass through those which commonly happen to men, but he was once in a state of profound humiliation, and now he is raised to great dignity and authority. According to Socinus and his followers, he experienced the most wonderful of all changes, for having been a man, he has since been made a God. To ascribe immutability to his person, if merely human, would be absurd and contrary to fact; and on this hypothesis, such passages as convey that idea can be understood only of his doctrine. But his person is certainly the subject of the following address, and he is contemplated in his uncreated nature. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations

* Heb. xiii. 8.

of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands : They shall perish, but thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed ; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." * There can be no doubt to whom these words should be applied, because they are quoted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to prove the superiority of the Son to angels. They refer immediately to his immutable duration ; but this attribute is peculiar to one who exists by necessity of nature, which implies the perpetual possession of every possible perfection.

Lastly, Divine power is ascribed to him. He is called the mighty God, when he is announced by a prophet as a child to be born, and a Son to be given to us ; † and "his kingdom ruleth over all." But the consideration of his omnipotence leads me to the next part of our division.

In the third place, It was proposed to prove the Divinity of our Saviour from the works which are ascribed to him, and which are evidently such as no mere man, and I may add, no creature could perform. Of this our adversaries are aware, and accordingly employ their arts of criticism to prove, that he did not perform them.

I begin with a passage, in which he evidently claims Divine power, and represents his own works as of equal extent with those of his Father. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do : for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." ‡ The occasion of these words, was a charge brought against him of having profaned the Sabbath, because he had cured a lame man upon it. How does he justify himself ? Is it by the plea, that works of mercy are not a violation of the sacred rest of that day ? No : it is by alleging the example of God, who carries on the operations of providence upon all the days

* Heb. i. 10—12.

† Isa. ix. 6.

‡ John v. 17—19.

of the week, and intimating very plainly, that he had the same right to work whenever he pleased. The example of God is appealed to in vain, if he did not possess the same authority, and was not equally independent of the law of the Sabbath. No mere man could plead, without impiety, this reason for working on the first day of the week. How should we be shocked if any person presumed to say to those who reproved him for breaking the Sabbath, God works, and therefore I may work? It is to be observed farther, that he represents himself as doing the same works which are done by the Father, and he expresses himself without any reservation: "What things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Every work performed by the one, is performed by the other. But this was impossible without an equality of power; and our Lord must be understood as, in the most explicit terms, claiming omnipotence. It may be objected, that he says, "the Son can do nothing of himself." But, if we should not be able satisfactorily to explain these words, still it is clear that, in concurrence with the Father, he is capable of producing every possible effect. The words probably refer to the mysterious union of the Father and the Son, in consequence of which the one does not work without the other, but both carry on their operations in concert; and he might refer to this fact in order to repel the accusation of the Jews; for how could he be guilty of profaning the Sabbath by a work, which he had performed in concurrence with the Author of the Sabbath? I proceed to particulars.

First, The creation of the universe is ascribed to him. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Παντα is a universal term, and is so to be understood, unless circumstances obviously require it to be limited in its meaning. Our opponents would restrict it, not from any necessity arising from the context, but because they must get quit of this proof of the Divinity of Christ. By *all things*, then, we are to understand, according to them, the moral world, or the Church. *All things are reformed by him*, say some, for he introduced a new religion, to correct the errors and vices of mankind; or, *all things were*

* John i. 3.

done by him, as other critics choose to render the word *εγενετο*. He did all things in the New Dispensation; he preached the gospel, and gave a commission to the Apostles, and enacted laws for the government of his followers. The Evangelist happens to say soon after, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." The translation of *εγενετο*, which was proper in the third verse, will be proper also in the tenth, which we must read thus: "He was in the world, and the world was done by him." Whether the world means the earth, or its inhabitants, it would puzzle Œdipus himself to explain the proposition, "*The world was done by Christ.*" To say, that *all things* are the church, or the human race as reformed by the Gospel, is liable to this objection, that the Evangelist uses *the world*, in verse 10, as an equivalent term to *all things*, in verse 3; and the *world* never, in the sacred writings, signifies the Church, although *the world to come* sometimes denotes the New Dispensation. Besides, how could it be said, that Christ was in this world, and it knew him not? The reformed world always knew him, for it was reformed by the Gospel which revealed him. This Unitarian comment may be dismissed as unintelligible. The most distinguished critics have understood the words in the literal acceptance, and rejected the figurative sense as absurd. We formerly referred to this passage as a proof of the pre-existence of our Saviour; and, taking into one view the various attempts which have been made to explain away all the particulars in it, we may say with Dr Owen, "I think, since the beginning, place it where you will, the beginning of the world, or the beginning of the gospel, there never was such an exposition of the words of God or man." Christ was in the beginning of his own ministry; a fact, no doubt, which we should not have known, if the Evangelist had not informed us of it; he was with God, or he retired to converse with him, and to receive instructions for his ministry; he was a God, or, in truth, was not a God, but a mere man; and he made all things, that is, he made nothing, but reformed some things. Such are the wonderful discoveries of Unitarian criticism.

* John i. 10.

Coloss. i. 16, 17.—“ For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” One should think that this single passage would be sufficient to settle the dispute. It is a commentary, or amplification of the words of the Evangelist, “ And without him was not any thing made that was made.” It will be acknowledged, I think, by every person of candour, that, if it had been the design of the Apostle to inform us, that Jesus Christ created the world, he could not have selected terms more proper for the purpose. The universe is described by “all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible,” for every thing is comprehended in this classification; and thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, are specified, that no room might be left for imagining, that he was concerned in making only the subordinate parts of it. If it should be asked, how he, who was born about sixty years before the date of this Epistle, could give being to this material and intellectual frame, which, according to the Hebrew chronology, had existed for four thousand years? it is stated, that *he was before it*, before it in time, in respect of his superior nature, of which abundant proof has been already produced. Lest it should be alleged, in order to evade the evidence of his proper Divinity, that he acted by delegated power, and was not the primary agent, but a minister of God, it is added, that as all things were created, *ἐὶ αὐτοῦ*, *by him*, so they were created, *εἰς αὐτόν*, *to him*; or *for him*. He is the last end of the creation, as the Father is said to be, “who made the world by Jesus Christ,” and of whom it is said, *ἐξ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰς αὐτόν τα πάντα*, “of him, and through him, and to him are all things.”* Now, *he* must be considered as a principal in the work, for whose glory it was wrought. It may be objected, that, in the preceding verse, Christ is called *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*, the *first-born* of the *whole creation*,† and is thus numbered among creatures. But, this inference is directly at variance with the verses following, for if all things, with-

* Eph. iii. 9. Rom. xi. 36.

† Colos. i. 15.

out exception, were created by him, how can he be one of them? Did he create himself? Unless we are disposed to charge the Apostle with a palpable blunder, a gross contradiction, we must understand *πρωτοτοκος*, either, according to the explanation of some, as signifying the *first-begetter* or the *producer* of all things, or as used here (as it is on some other occasions) metaphorically, to denote a person holding the chief place, the Lord of the whole creation, as the first-born in a family was lord and possessor of the inheritance. This sense of the term agrees with the words following, for undoubtedly he is Supreme over all things by whom "they were created." Here, again, that species of criticism which seeks not to illustrate but to obscure, not to interpret but to pervert, has employed its usual arts to evade the evidence. The passage, we are told, signifies a new moral creation effected by the Gospel; the things in heaven and on earth are the Jews and Gentiles, who have been enlightened and reformed by it; and things visible and invisible, are the present and future generations of men. Was a commentary so far-fetched, and so different from the natural sense of the terms, ever given before? We might ask Unitarians, whether they actually believe this to be the real sense of the passage? Or, if it be said that we have no right to bring them to confession, we may ask them, whether it would have occurred to any person who had not first determined to reject the literal meaning, and then tortured his brains to find out another more suitable to a preconceived system? It is a discovery of modern date; for ages the words were understood as we explain them; and the Greek Fathers, who read the New Testament in their vernacular language, considered the Apostle as describing a proper creation.

In the second place, The preservation of all things is ascribed to him. "By him all things consist," * *συνεστηκε*, are kept together, or preserved from falling into confusion or annihilation. This is surely a divine work; and it could not be said, consistently with reason and piety, that the universe is sustained by a creature. The same thing is taught in another place:—"Who being the brightness of his glory, and

* Colos. i. 17.

the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power,"—*φέρων τε τα πάντα τῷ ρηματι τῆς ἐνναμείας αὐτοῦ*,—"sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* *Τα πάντα* signifies the universe, which the Son of God bears up, or sustains, by his mighty word. The expression excludes the idea of labour or difficulty, and imports that the creation is continued in existence and order by his efficacious will. "Thou, even thou, art JEHOVAH alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all," or "makest them all to live."† "JEHOVAH, thou preservest man and beast."‡ When we find similar language used concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, there can remain no doubt that he also is JEHOVAH, unless we will venture to say, that the sustentation of living and inanimate beings is falsely ascribed to him by the Apostle, or that God has, since the time when the Psalmist and Prophet wrote, admitted a creature to co-operate with him in the administrations of providence.

In the third place, The resurrection of the dead is ascribed to him. It will be universally acknowledged that this is exclusively a work of God. He only who first framed the human body, and connected with it a living spirit, can restore that body after it has undergone dissolution in the grave, and bring back the soul from the invisible world to its original abode. Agreeable to this dictate of reason is the declaration of Scripture, that it is "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."|| Jesus Christ raised the dead while he was sojourning on the earth; as the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus, besides many others not named; and it is he who will appear in the end of the world, and restore to life the millions of the human race who are sleeping in the dust. "The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."§ It may be objected, that this work is not a decisive proof of his

* Heb. i. 3. † Neh. ix. 6. ‡ Ps. xxxvi. 6. || Rom. iv. 17. § John v. 28, 29.

Divinity, because the dead were raised by some of the Prophets, and by all the Apostles, who received power to this effect when they were sent forth to preach, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead." * The simple fact, that they received this power from our Saviour, is sufficient to convince us of his superiority. What they did, they did in his name; and, consequently, we cannot justly consider him and them as possessing an equality of power. Let it be farther observed, that while the Prophets raised the dead in the name of the God of Israel, and the Apostles in the name of their Master, he performed this miracle in his own name, that is, by his own power, and spake of himself in terms, which no Prophet or Apostle would have presumed to employ:—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." † Still it may be said, that the power which he displayed upon earth, and will more gloriously manifest at the general resurrection, is not his own, but is the power of God, with the exercise of which he was entrusted for the purposes of his mission. But the delegation of omnipotence to a creature is inconceivable and impossible; the supposition of delegated power is inconsistent with the performance of the work in his own name, and it is directly opposed to his express declaration, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." ‡ These words are an explicit assumption of equal power with the Father, and of the same uncontrolled and sovereign exercise of it in the restoration of life.

In the last place, The final judgment is ascribed to him. The Scripture says, that "JEHOVAH is our judge;" || but it says also, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." § "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory,—all nations shall be gathered before him." ¶ The inference is plain, that Jesus Christ is God. It may be said, (and this is the language of Scripture itself,) that God will judge the

* Matth. x. 8.

† John xi. 25.

‡ John v. 21.

|| Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

§ 2 Cor. v. 10.

¶ Matth. xxv. 31, 32.

world *by him* ; but let us not be carried away by the sound of words, without attending to their meaning. The visible Judge will be a man, it is acknowledged ; but will he be a mere man ? Is a creature to decide the fate of other creatures ? Was it his law which they obeyed or transgressed ? Has a creature the reward of heaven and the punishment of hell at his disposal ? These questions suggest a negative answer to every person not divested of reason and piety. Every one must give an account of himself to God, and who but God is qualified to receive the account ? Omniscience is necessary to him who pronounces the final sentence, as well as omnipotence to execute it ; for it will proceed, not merely upon the external actions of men, but upon their motives and their thoughts, which are known to him alone who sees not with eyes of flesh, but searches the hearts and tries the reins. Christ will indeed act in concurrence with the Father, who is hence said to judge the world by him ; but the high office necessarily supposes him to be possessed of infinite perfections.

LECTURE XXXII.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST INFERRED FROM THE RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND
HONOUR RENDERED TO HIM; INSTANCES.—THE DOCTRINE OF HIS
DIVINITY SHEWN TO BE INTERWOVEN WITH THE SCRIPTURAL SCHEME
OF REDEMPTION.—OBJECTIONS STATED AND ANSWERED.

I PROCEED, in the fourth place, to prove the Divinity of Christ from the religious honours which are given to him.

Reason and Scripture concur in appropriating religious worship to God, who alone is possessed of those perfections which are presupposed in the object of our prayers and thanksgivings, and the sentiments and affections which these are designed to express, as supreme respect, love, trust, hope, and resignation. It is an understood condition, that he whom we address has a perfect knowledge of our situation,—comprehending our dangers, our temptations, our afflictions, and our desires; that he has resources adequate to the supply of all who make application to him; and that he is able to afford us effectual assistance in every possible case. We believe him to be omniscient, omnipotent, and infinite in goodness. To worship a creature is as great an absurdity as it would be to intreat a poor man to make us rich, or a subject to pardon us, while the remission of punishment is the exclusive prerogative of the sovereign. It is sacrilege, a robbery of God, from whom we take the honour to which he has an exclusive right, and transfer it to a being who, in comparison with him, is less than nothing and vanity. It is the idolatry

which is prohibited under the severest denunciations, and which consists in giving that glory to another, which is due to God alone. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”† The Gentiles are condemned for erecting temples and altars, offering sacrifices, and addressing prayers to others besides the Creator of heaven and earth, and are pronounced guilty because “they did service to those who by nature were not gods.” From these, and innumerable passages, it appears that religious worship should be given to the self-existent and all-perfect Being alone ; that he will not permit, and still less command, us to worship a creature ; that a creature cannot acquire by rank, or dignity, or office, a right to the honour which is peculiar to Him who derives nothing from others, and gives to all the life which they enjoy, and the qualifications by which they are distinguished.

That religious worship is given to Jesus Christ, we shall afterwards see ; but in the mean time, I remark, that from a perception of the necessary connexion between Divine worship and the Divinity of the object, Socinus maintained that our Saviour, although a man by nature, had, since his exaltation, become *Verus Deus*, true God, having received supreme dominion over heaven and earth, and being made a partaker of the Divine perfections of omniscience and omnipotence. But upon this point, there was a division among his followers, some of whom denied that Christ could be lawfully worshipped, while Socinus defended the contrary opinion, and refused to acknowledge those who differed from him to be Christians. The controversy was carried on with much keenness, and Socinus, impelled by intolerant zeal, which, it seems, is not peculiar to the orthodox, complained to the Prince of Transylvania, who committed his principal antagonist, Francis David, to prison, in which he died. If Socinus agreed with the Scriptures, in asserting that Divine honours should be paid to our Lord, he was at variance with his own fundamental tenet of his simple humanity, and sought in vain to reconcile the two statements by the inconceivable notion of his subsequent deification. David, and others who joined

* Exod. xx. 3.

† Luke iv. 8.

with him (for he was not alone) saw more clearly, or avowed more honestly, the consequences of the opinion which they held in common concerning the person of Christ; for certainly, if he was only a man, they reasoned justly when they affirmed, that by no change of state could he become entitled to the same honour with God. Religious worship is not founded in arbitrary appointment, but in the nature of things. It is not due to God, merely because it is commanded, but because, possessing all perfection, he is worthy of it, and we are his creatures, who hold all by his bounty, and are dependent upon his care. This reason of worship is wanting in all created beings, in the highest as well as in the lowest. Hence Francis David and his friends had the advantage in their dispute with Socinus, and urged him with arguments, to which he could not answer in a satisfactory manner.

I proceed to the proof, that Jesus Christ is the object of religious worship, and begin with his own general declaration: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."* Observe the occasion on which these words were spoken. It was when the Jews, who were offended because he had profaned the Sabbath, as they thought, by curing a lame man upon it, now accused him of blasphemy in making himself equal to God. If our Lord had been a mere man, he would have repelled the charge, and shewn that his pretensions were not higher than a creature might have made without arrogance and impiety. But does he utter a single word to this effect? No! his whole discourse is a repetition of his claim, and the words now under consideration are not the least remarkable part of it. We cannot conceive a more explicit assertion of his equality with the Father. He claims equal honour, and would he have done so, if his dignity had not been equal? The honour which is given to the Father, is to be given also to the Son. Now the honour which we give to the Father consists in adoration, praise, unreserved confidence, humble submission, and, in a word, the dedication of soul and body

* John v. 22, 23.

to his service. We are therefore to adore the Son, to make him the object of our trust and hope, to resign ourselves to his disposal, and to yield implicit obedience to his commands. There is no mention made here of supreme and subordinate honour, but in every respect it is the same. And it is enjoined by the Father himself. But if Jesus Christ is a mere man, as Unitarians affirm, how can the will of the Father, in this case, be reconciled with his general declaration, that he will not give his glory to another? Has he revoked it in favour of the Son of Mary? Is the God of the New Testament at variance with the God of the Old? It is in vain to compare the words of Paul, "He that despiseth us, despiseth not man, but God;"* for they are totally different. There is no demand of the same respect to the Apostles, which belongs to God himself, but a simple and intelligible declaration, that as they were the messengers of God, the contempt with which some might treat their message would ultimately terminate upon Him. No Apostle ever said, It is the will of the Father that all men should honour us, even as they honour himself. They would have deemed it impious to speak so; and they guarded against such an idea, by saying to those who were disposed to admire them, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"† "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."‡

That Jesus Christ was worshipped by the primitive Christians, is a fact so clearly established in the New Testament, that nothing but prejudice, blinding the mental eye, can hinder any person from perceiving it. The truth is, that this worship was so general, and so publicly known, that it is used as a description of his followers, who are more than once denominated those *who called upon his name*; a phrase which often occurs in the Scriptures, and signifies invocation or prayer. "He hath authority to bind all that call upon thy name." ||—*παντας τους επικαλουμενους το ονομα σου*. "To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," *συν πασι τοις επι-*

* 1 Thess. iv. 8. † Acts iii. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 7. || Acts ix. 14.

καλουμένοις το ὄνομα του Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστου.* It has been asserted, indeed, that the words may be rendered, *who are called*, or, *who call themselves* by thy name, that is, who profess to be the disciples of Christ. It has been observed, however, that in Scripture, when it is designed to express the idea of denominating, or calling after another, a different form is used, and the name of the one person is then said to be *called upon* the other. “The house upon which thy name is called.” “My people upon whom my name is called.”† It has been farther observed, that in the translation of the Seventy, when a tense of the verb *ἐπικαλεω* occurs in the middle voice, it has an active signification, and denotes calling upon another. The phrase, *ἐπικαλεῖσθαι το ὄνομα*,—*τον θεον*,—*με*,—*αυτον*, occurs often, and is expressive of the act of invocation. Even those critics, who would give a different translation when the verb is used in reference to our Saviour, render it in the sense of calling upon, when passages are quoted from the Old Testament in which the object is understood to be the Father; thus shewing, that their occasional deviations in translating it, are not founded upon the settled meaning of the term, but upon the necessity of their system. It is convenient to conceal this decisive proof of the divinity of Christ, and to represent the primitive Christians as not calling upon, but calling themselves by, his name, as the ancient philosophical sects adopted an appellation derived from their respective founders. In short, *ἐπικαλεῖσθαι* is a complaisant word, and changes its meaning on all necessary occasions, to serve the cause of Unitarianism. The first disciples were worshippers of Christ; and there is one eminent instance which well deserves our attention. “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon and saying,” (this is the literal translation, and the word *God*, which our translators have inserted, is an unnecessary and improper supplement,) “calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”§ It has been said, that “this solitary example is of itself no sufficient warrant for a practice contrary to the precepts of Christ, and the doctrine of the Apostles.” That it is con-

* 1 Cor. i. 2. † 1 Kings viii. 43. 2 Chron vii. 14. *margin*. § Acts vii. 59, 60.

trary to the precepts of Christ, and the doctrine of the Apostles, we deny; and that it is not a solitary example has already appeared; but it is thus that Unitarians, those masters of reason, draw conclusions without premises, and assume as certain what remains to be proved. Is this their respect for a holy man and a martyr? Was the last act of his life an act of transgression? Did his expiring breath utter the language of idolatry? How, then, was he "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost?" It has been said again, that the invocation of Stephen was justifiable, because Christ was really present, and the martyr saw him; but that our case is very different, because Christ is now at a great distance from us in heaven. But we would ask those who make use of this argument, whether it would be lawful to pray to our Saviour, or to invoke his aid, if he were present? If they answer in the affirmative, then we tell them, that it is lawful for us, as well as for Stephen, to pray to him, because it has been proved that, in his divine nature, he fills heaven and earth. But, as they allege that he was only a man, we ask again, whether Stephen, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, would address such a prayer to him, even when he was present? What was it to "receive his spirit," but to admit him into the region of everlasting peace? What was it "not to lay sin to the charge" of his murderers, but to repeal the sentence of the divine law, and grant them impunity? Were these blessings to be asked from a creature? What greater could he have asked from God? Can a creature pardon our sins, and bestow eternal life? It would be wise to abandon these miserable subterfuges. The passage is plain; and no man of candour will rest in any other view of it, than that Stephen, enlightened and guided by the Spirit of grace and supplication, died in the act of adoring his Saviour, and, therefore, that the Saviour is God.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verse 6, the Apostle, among the proofs of the pre-eminence of the Son, quotes the following passage, and applies it to him: "Again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The words are taken from the ninety-seventh psalm, where they

run thus : "Worship him all ye gods." The term *Elohim* is sometimes applied to created beings, and we have the authority of the Apostle for considering this as an instance. Those who are called gods in the Psalm, are called angels in the Epistle. They are addressed while a description is given of the reign of JEHOVAH, on account of which the earth is summoned to rejoice, and the multitude of the isles to be glad. We should not have known that the reference is to the reign of the Messiah, if Paul had not informed us ; but, believing that he was under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we follow with confidence when he leads the way. The gods, then, are angels, and the object of their worship is Jesus Christ. It is a mere evasion to say that "the angels are the former prophets and messengers of God, who are summoned to do homage to Christ in consequence of his resurrection from the dead, and to acknowledge him as their superior." If celestial beings are not mentioned in this chapter, we can find them nowhere in the Scriptures ; and that it is not simple homage, but religious worship which is demanded, is evident from this consideration, that he, whom they are called to worship, is, according to the Psalmist, the JEHOVAH "whose righteousness the heavens declare, and whose glory all the people see."

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders ; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."† All these things belong to our Saviour, and are ascribed to him by the holy worshipping assembly. The spirits of heaven, and the redeemed from the earth, unite in celebrating his praise. They worship him in the same manner as JEHOVAH is worshipped. "Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give

* Rev. i. 5, 6.

† Rev. v. 11, 12.

unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ; bring an offering, and come before him : worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth, is thine." * As he is honoured with the same ascriptions as the Father, so he is joined with him in the same act of adoration and thanksgiving. "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." † Can Unitarians produce another instance in which the name of a creature is thus associated with that of God, in the devotions of his people ? They will not find it in the Scriptures ; they must seek for it in the litany of the Church of Rome ; and even there, although divine honours are given to creatures, care is professedly taken not to elevate them to the same rank with the Supreme Being, as Jesus Christ is elevated by an inspired writer in the passages quoted.

I conclude with the argument derived from the form of Christian Baptism, which is administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." ‡ If we suppose *εις το ονομα* to be used for *εν τη ονοματι*, we are baptized by the authority of the Son, as well as of the Father : But how can this be, if the Son is only a man ? Do religious ordinances emanate from the Creator and a creature, as a common source ? Do the commands of a creature bind our consciences as much as the commands of the Creator ? If we translate *εις το ονομα* literally, *to the name*, baptism is our solemn dedication to the persons in whose name it is administered. Are we dedicated to the service of a creature ? Who is Jesus Christ, if he is only a man, that we should obey him ? It is said, indeed, that the Israelites "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." || The word Moses sometimes signifies the religion which Moses delivered as the minister of God. "When Moses is read to them," that is, the books of Moses, or the laws of Moses, "the veil is upon their hearts." § All agree that the meaning is, that the Israelites, by passing through the Red Sea, were separated to the service of God, as enjoined by the ministry of Moses.

* 1 Chron. xvi. 28, 29. xxix. 11. † Rev. vii. 10. ‡ Matth. xxviii. 19.

|| 1 Cor. x. 2. § 2 Cor. iii. 15.

But the meaning of the words used in Christian baptism is manifestly different, unless we choose to say that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Christian Religion. It is plain, that in the same sense in which we are consecrated to the Father, we are consecrated to the Son; and consequently, that we are laid under an obligation to worship and serve the one, as well as the other. We never read that the Israelites were baptized in the name of JEHOVAH and of Moses. The Lord and the servant are not joined together as objects of equal respect, as the Father and the Son are. The cause of the difference is this, that the Son is himself a Divine person, and therefore entitled to the same honour with the Father.

I have gone over, in order, the proofs which are usually adduced to establish the Divinity of Christ. It is wonderful, that a point so clearly taught in the sacred writings, should have ever been made the subject of dispute; it is still more wonderful that, after the ample discussion which it has undergone, it has not been settled to the satisfaction of all parties. There is something unaccountable in the opposition which it has met with from persons professing to receive the Scriptures as the standard of their faith. If the arguments which present themselves in such abundance, whether consisting in express testimonies, or in legitimate and obvious inferences from them, are deemed insufficient, it would puzzle a wiser man than I pretend to be, to tell what would convince. The doctrine could not have been stated in plainer terms. He who runs may read it, if he will open his eyes. It is probable that, in whatever terms the doctrine had been delivered, some men would have objected. Human language, the only vehicle of Divine communications to human beings, is not proof against Unitarian criticism, which wrests words from their natural sense, and affixes any meaning to them, however harsh and remote, which suits the design of the critics. All that we can gain by our controversy with them, is to expose their unfairness to the world, that the simple and inconsiderate may not be seduced: of convincing them we have no hope, unless that power be exerted which casts down imaginations,

and every high thing, and brings all the thoughts into captivity to Christ.

To the arguments which have been stated, nothing needs to be added. But for your complete satisfaction, I shall lay before you some considerations, arising from a different view of the subject, and showing that the Divinity of Christ is interwoven with the scheme of Redemption. It is a sort of *a posteriori* reasoning, which, from the character that he sustains in that great work, and the part that he acts, proves that he must be a person superior in dignity to all men, and to all creatures.

First, Let us consider him as the Revealer of the Divine Will, the Instructor of the human race. In this general office, men were associated with him, as the Prophets of the old dispensation, and the Apostles of the new ; and hence he bears the same names, being called “ the Prophet whom God raised up according to his promise,” and “ the Apostle of our profession.” His pre-eminence, however, is undisputed ; and it will be acknowledged by all, that no other person was ever so gifted, or possessed of equal authority. It belonged to him in this character, to complete and close divine revelation ; to make known to the world the whole counsel of God ; to publish truths which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, nor had it entered into the mind of man to conceive ; and further, internally to illuminate the minds of men, to remove the veil of prejudice and error, to impart a vivid and commanding perception of invisible things, to dispose them to receive truths humiliating to the pride, and revolting to the corrupt propensities of the heart. If it be granted that the latter part of this statement was comprehended in his office, it cannot be consistently denied that he was greater than a human teacher ; for no mere man has an absolute control over the minds of others, and can guide their movements according to his pleasure. But even the communication of a perfect knowledge of the Divine Will, which was effected by his own ministry, and by that of his Apostles whom he qualified for the work, seems to have required greater powers of understanding than could fall to the lot of a creature ; an understanding commensurate to the subject, which has a height and a

depth, a length and a breadth, not to be measured by a limited capacity. If it should be said, that God might have illuminated his mind, as he illuminated the minds of other Prophets, and fitted him for his duty by successive revelations, we should recollect that, according to his own testimony, he had the same knowledge of the Father which the Father had of him. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." * We should recollect, that the Evangelist John ascribes a knowledge to him quite peculiar, when he says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." † Would he have used such language of any creature? To see God, is to know him perfectly; to be in his bosom, is to be the intimate associate of his counsels. More is meant than that the man Jesus Christ had a greater degree of knowledge than other men; the words evidently import, that he had knowledge of a totally different kind, arising from immediate vision, and perpetual communion. No Prophet or Apostle is ever said to have enjoyed such means of knowledge, even in an inferior degree. None of them had seen God; none of them was in his bosom. The voice from the excellent Glory made a clear distinction between him and all other teachers. "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." The Father substituted him in his own room, as the instructor of the human race; he pointed him out as the object of the attention, and faith, and obedience of the world; he commanded us henceforth to learn wisdom from his lips, and to regulate our conduct by his authority. Did he ever give such a command concerning any other person? Was it ever said concerning any other, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." ‡ "Every soul, which will not hear this Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." || We are informed that "the people were astonished at his doctrine, because he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes;" but we rise a step higher and say, not even as the Prophets. Between his manner, and theirs, there is a very remarkable difference. They, in fact,

* Matth. xi. 27. † John i. 18. ‡ John iii. 36. || Acts iii. 23.

claimed no personal authority, and delivered their instructions in the name of the Lord ; while he spoke in his own name : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Who is this that requires men to take him as their supreme guide in religion ? who is this that makes his own testimony the foundation of faith ? Would a human messenger have ventured to advance such pretensions ? Could he have adopted this lofty style without impiety ? In conformity to this claim, when he gave the Apostles a commission to teach the nations, he gave it in his own name. They were his ambassadors ; they were to produce his warrant for the doctrines which they taught, and the laws which they enjoined ; they were to subject men to him as the Lord of their consciences. Was it a mere man who issued such orders, and demanded the homage of all people, and kindred, and tongues ? I shall mention one circumstance more which is a proof of his Divinity, that he inspired those ambassadors, gave them the Holy Ghost, and invested them with the power of working miracles, to attest the truth of their message. The Apostles, it is true, also communicated supernatural gifts ; but, there is this essential difference, that what they did, was done confessedly in his name, and, therefore, instead of weakening, strengthens the evidence of his power ; whereas he acted with independent authority, dispensing, as a Sovereign, gifts over which he had absolute control. “ He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” * Surely this is the voice of a God, and not of a man.

In the second place, Let us consider him in the character of a priest, whose office it was to offer a propitiatory sacrifice, for the whole human race, as some maintain, or for the elect, according to others, composing a multitude which no man can number. By offering a propitiatory sacrifice, I mean, that he was to suffer death for them, that the claims of justice being satisfied, the moral Governor of the universe might release them from the penalty of sin. Now, this transaction supposes, that his sufferings were an equivalent for theirs ; that the ends of punishment were as fully answered by his death, as if the transgressors had died ; that the divine authority was upheld, the divine righteousness was asserted,

* John xx. 22.

the divine holiness was manifested in unclouded splendour. Would these designs have been accomplished by the death of a mere man? There is a manifest disproportion between the means and the end. It is unaccountable upon any principle of moral calculation, that the blood of one man, whatever value it might be conceived to have derived from his virtues and endowments, should have been accepted as a full compensation for the debt which millions owed, for innumerable violations of the law? Its acceptance as such, would have lowered the divine government in the estimation of its subjects; it would have confirmed them in the opinion, that its demands were not high, that it felt little resentment against crimes, and that it wanted only the shadow of a pretext for dismissing them with impunity. But the Scriptures teach, that the death of Christ was a true and proper atonement for sin, and was so complete, that God is just, although he remit the sins of those who believe; and that the highest glory redounds to his moral perfections, from the dispensation of grace. There must, therefore, be a greater worth in the blood, and greater efficacy in the sufferings of Christ, than in the blood and sufferings of any other person. No such effect is ever ascribed to the death of a prophet, an apostle, or any other martyr; it is not said, that they expiated their own guilt by the sacrifice of their lives, and still less, that they expiated the guilt of their brethren. Had our blessed Lord been only a man, his blood would not have redeemed us from the curse of God, any more than the blood of Stephen, and Peter, and Paul. Of this our antagonists are sensible; and accordingly they deny that his death was vicarious, and affirm that the sole design of it was to give us an example of patience, and to attest his doctrine; thus maintaining the consistency of their own system, although they are directly at variance with the doctrine of Scripture. Such, you may observe by the way, is the intimate connexion of the truth which I am defending, with other articles of Christianity, that the denial of it is the removing of the foundation, in consequence of which the whole structure falls to the ground. We, who believe the Divinity of Christ, can account, without difficulty, for the great and happy effects which are ascribed

to his death. We can understand, how the sufferings of a man, who was personally united to the Son of God, were of greater value, in a moral estimate, than the sufferings of the actual transgressors. We can see, how this single sacrifice answered all the ends of justice, and demonstrated in the most solemn manner, the righteousness and holiness of the Universal Governor, the unspeakable evil of sin, the immutable purity and unbending rigour of the law. I shall not appeal to the words, “Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,”* because there is a various reading which substitutes *Lord* for *God*; but surely the same Apostle meant to convey a higher idea of our Saviour than that of a mere man, when he said, “Had they”—the Princes of this world—“known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;”† and again, “The law maketh men high-priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”‡ They are more blind than the princes of this world, who, amidst the light of revelation which now shines, can perceive upon Calvary no greater scene than a common martyrdom. Strange, that notwithstanding the preternatural darkness, the earthquake, and the opening of the graves, they should be more insensible than an ignorant heathen, who, convinced by the signs in heaven and on earth, that the supposed malefactor was no ordinary sufferer, exclaimed, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Let us, in the last place, consider him as sustaining the character of universal Lord. He is represented as invested with supreme authority over the church, and all persons and things upon earth; and likewise over angels, principalities, and powers in the invisible world, the noblest and mightiest creatures in the universe. Besides his own declaration, “all power is committed to me in heaven and on earth,” let us attend to the words of an Apostle, who, having informed us, that, though “he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” adds, “wherefore God also hath highly

* Acts xx. 28.

† 1 Cor. ii. 8.

‡ Heb. vii. 28.

exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." * One should think, that his investiture with unlimited dominion over the creation, would prove to the satisfaction of every reflecting mind, that he is not a creature, that he is not a mere man, but a person, in whom the fulness of the Godhead resides; for it is impossible to conceive that he could hold that dominion, and perform the various acts which it implies, unless he were possessed of divine perfections. It is certainly necessary, that he should be acquainted with all his subjects, and all their circumstances; that he should be capable of conducting the whole system of affairs with order, and to its destined ends; and that he should be able to keep every being in his proper place, to restrain wayward movements or confine them within due bounds, and to make the mightiest and the most refractory bend to his purpose. In other words, he could not govern the universe without infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, and infinite power. It would be a mockery to place a creature upon the throne, to whom the extent of his kingdom would be unknown, and whose proceedings would be at one time marked by error, and at another embarrassed by opposition. The duties arising from the relation in which we stand to him as our Sovereign, are such as we owe to him alone, who is God over all. We are bound, by express command, to trust in him, to worship him, to obey him, to submit to his disposal, to expect from his lips the sentence which will decide our eternal state; and what more do we owe to the Father? And we have already seen, that it is His will, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour himself. Unitarians get quit of this argument, by the usual expedient of figures, as if the sacred writers, as soon as they began to speak of our Saviour, had been hurried away by some unaccountable impulse, into the region of metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. All this magnificent language concerning his kingdom, we must be care-

* Phil. ii. 6—11.

ful not to understand literally, lest we fall into the great error of supposing, that he is actually placed at the head of affairs. Let us not be so simple as to adopt this idea. Nothing more is meant than the moral influence of the Gospel; and the reign of Christ is like the reign of any other man over his followers, who have embraced his doctrines, and submitted to his institutions. "The subjection of all mankind to the rules of piety and virtue delivered by Christ, is shadowed out under the imagery of a mighty king, to whom all power was given in heaven and earth." So say our antagonists; but they only will receive this interpretation, who have been given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie.

I have laid before you a variety of arguments, by which the Divinity of Jesus Christ is evinced; and in doing so, I have endeavoured to obviate such objections as are made to the passages quoted. I shall conclude by bringing under your notice some other objections, with answers to them.

It is objected, that the supposed Divinity of Christ is inconsistent with the doctrine of the Unity of God; and those passages which affirm that there is one God, and that there is no God besides him, are confidently brought forward to refute our opinion. But we know those passages as well as our opponents, and are as fully persuaded of the truth which they inculcate. We hold at the same time, the Unity of God and the Divinity of Christ, without at all thinking that we are liable to the charge of self-contradiction; for our doctrine is, not that the Father is one God, and the Son is another, but that, while there is only one Divine nature, the Father and the Son are distinct persons in that nature. It is absurd, therefore, to allege the acknowledged Unity of God as subversive of our doctrine, till it is proved, and not merely asserted, that personal distinctions in one Divine nature are impossible. For a more complete answer to this objection, I refer to our illustration of the Trinity.

It is objected, that whatever may be implied in the title or designation, Son of God, it is a fair conclusion from it, that he is not God himself. It is admitted, that the son of a man as such, is also a man; why is it denied, that the Son of God is also God? We grant, indeed, that the two cases are differ-

ent, because a man and his son are two separate beings, have the same specific, but not the same numerical nature ; but the title leads us to conceive, that he who is the Son of God, has the nature of God, and, since the nature cannot be divided or multiplied, that the same nature is common to both. The title implies a community of essence ; and all that we can legitimately infer from it is, that he is a distinct person from the Father.

It is objected, that our Lord excludes himself from the honour of divinity, in these words, “ This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” * But surely a single passage, instead of being set in opposition to an hundred other passages, should be explained, if possible, in consistency with them. We grant that our Lord would have denied his own Divinity, if he had said that the Father only is God, to the exclusion of himself ; but it is quite evident that he merely distinguishes his Father from other pretenders to Divinity. He does not say, “ Thou only art the true God,” but “ Thou art the only true God.” When the Scripture calls the Father, “ the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,” the design is obviously to except, not Jesus Christ, but the “ lords many” of the Gentiles ; and accordingly, Jesus Christ receives the same title in other places, being designated “ King of kings, and Lord of lords,” and the “ Prince of the kings of the earth.” “ The Socinian argues,” says Bishop Middleton, “ as if in our Saviour’s days there had been the same controversy about the *nature* and *essence* of the One True God, which arose afterwards ; whereas the dispute then was, whether there were a *plurality* of gods, or only *One* : The Jews held the latter opinion, and the whole pagan world the former. Our Saviour, therefore, keeping, if I may so call it, this controversy in view, tells his hearers that eternal life is to be obtained only by a knowledge of the One True God, and of Jesus Christ, thus at once directing the mind to the truths both of natural and of revealed religion ; and the hearers of our Lord could not possibly have understood him in any other sense. It is, therefore, perfectly frivolous to introduce this passage into the Trinitarian dispute ; and the stress which has been

* John xvii. 3.

laid on it, can be accounted for only from the extreme difficulty of giving to the opposite hypothesis any thing like the sanction of Scripture." * Besides, there is a passage in one of the Epistles of John, from which it appears that the words before us are not exclusive of the Son, because what is here affirmed of the Father, is there affirmed also of him. "And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." † It is certain, that the Father is often called God, and our Saviour is mentioned, at the same time, as distinct from him. The reason is, that, in the economy of redemption, the Father sustains the majesty and maintains the rights of the Godhead, while Christ acts as Mediator. By him we come to the Father, but we do not hold him, personally considered, to be subordinate. We worship the Son also; but the usual order is to draw near to the Father in the name of the Son. Keeping this economy in mind, we can easily understand the passage before us, and others of a similar nature. "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." ‡

It is objected, that our Saviour himself acknowledged his inferiority to the Father, and cannot, therefore, be God in the proper sense of the term. "My Father is greater than I." || But there is another passage which we shall do well to take into consideration at the same time. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." § The words have undergone much criticism, which it would be tedious to detail; but, whether we translate *οὐχ ἀρπαγμον ἡγήσατο*, *he thought it not robbery*, or, *he did not seize as a prey*, or catch at equality to God, the result is the same, namely, that he was really equal; for, if this had not been the case, there would have been no humility in declining to display his equality for a time; and, as an example of humility, the case is introduced. It would be a strange recommendation of the humility of a creature, to say that he did not aim at equality to God. Now we are sure, that the Scripture does not contradict itself; and hence, when two parts of it appear to be at

* Middleton on the Greek Article, p. 372. ed. 1808. † 1 John v. 20.

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

|| John xiv. 28.

§ Phil. ii. 6.

variance, there can be no doubt that there is a mode of reconciling them, which we should endeavour to find out. Our Saviour is exhibited in two characters, as the Son of God, and as Mediator. In the former, he is described as possessing all the perfections of Deity ; but in the latter, as the servant of the Father, acting in obedience to his will. In this latter character the Father was greater than he, not essentially, but economically, as he who sends is in this respect greater than he who is sent ; and it is evident from the context, that this was the character in which our Saviour spoke when he declared the superiority of his Father. The subject of conversation was his ascension in human nature, his return to the Father, to receive the promised reward of his labours upon earth ; and on this occasion he appeared to be inferior, as the ambassador is to his Sovereign, who confers honour upon him for the wisdom and fidelity with which he has fulfilled his commission. “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for my Father is greater than I.”

This explanation is connected with another objection founded on the assignation of a subordinate character to him, while he is described as the servant of God :—“ I came—not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.”* It is certain, that although two persons be of equal rank, the one may consent, for a specified time and a particular purpose, to act the part of a servant to the other, without any diminution of his dignity, and, in this case, is inferior only in office. Notwithstanding this subordination, his rights are preserved, because it is entirely voluntary, and is intended to last only for a limited period, after which he will appear in his original equality. The application is obvious to our Lord, who being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant, and having emptied himself of his visible glory, was found in fashion as a man. Yet this humiliation, although profound, was not such as entirely to conceal his true character. While he held the place of a servant, he acted as a Lord, exercising sovereign authority over the elements, the bodies and souls of

* John vi. 38.

men, and the invisible world. It was evident to all who had eyes to see and minds to reflect, that he was quite different from the other messengers of God. "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and seas obey him?" In connexion with this argument, his own words have been referred to as inconsistent with his Divinity, because they are expressive of subordination and dependence:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."* But we have already considered them among the proofs of his Divinity, and undoubtedly they furnish a very strong argument for it, because they are an explicit claim of omnipotence, for he immediately adds, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

On the same general principle, we may reply to the objection, that he called God, his God, that he prayed to him, that he had a different will, saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."† The answer is, that, while we believe his Divinity, we hold also that he was a man, and as such stood in the same relation to God, and owed the same duties as other men; and that, having assumed the character, he acted in all things as the servant of the Father.

An objection is drawn from his answer to the person who said to him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"‡ The objection is this, God is good, and therefore, he who denies that this epithet ought to be applied to himself, is not God. Griesbach, whom Unitarians consider as infallible authority in settling the text, gives a different reading, "Why dost thou ask me concerning good, or the good?" But unluckily he retains the usual reading in two other gospels, and the result of his critical labours is to introduce a contradiction among the Evangelists. We may presume, that originally they all agreed, although now there is a difference in several manuscripts, particularly as this alteration of the text renders it in a great measure unmeaning. "Why callest thou me good?" Our Lord adapted his answer to the notions which the inquirer entertained of him, plainly looking upon him as merely a human teacher,—

* John v. 19.

† Matth. xxvi. 39.

‡ Matth. xix. 16.

as a prophet, perhaps, but not greater than a prophet. He would not allow flattering titles to be given to men, not even to himself when he was supposed to be only one of them. What right had a man to be called good, in the full acceptation of the term, since goodness can be predicated of him alone who possessed infinite perfections? Jesus does not speak of himself agreeably to what he really is, but according to this person's apprehensions; and nothing is more unfair than to conclude that he denied his own Divinity, because he refused to be addressed in language which should be appropriated to God, by one who believed him to be a creature.

It is objected, that Jesus Christ is expressly called a man, and such passages as the following are produced, as containing an unanswerable argument against his Divinity:—"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." "Jesus Christ, a man approved of God among you by miracles." "After me cometh a man, which is preferred before me." "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth."* We know all these passages, and if it would serve any purpose, would lend our aid to Unitarians in collecting many others of a similar strain; but they prove only, what we are always ready to acknowledge, that our blessed Saviour was a partaker of our nature, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. They do not prove that he was a mere man, unless it be ascertained to be impossible that he, who is man, may at the same time be God. This our adversaries affirm; but we demand demonstration, which they are unable to give. It was foretold, that "a virgin should conceive and bear a son," or that the Messiah should be a man; but it was added, that his name should be Immanuel, which signifies, God with us.†

As for the assertion, that if we maintain the Divinity of Christ, we must admit that the Deity was born, was imprisoned in the body of an infant, and suffered pain and death, it is unworthy of a serious refutation. Let Unitarians indulge, if they will, in coarse and vulgar declamation, which can injure only themselves, and is a pitiful attempt to prejudice the minds of men against a cause which their arguments

* 1 Tim. ii. 5. Acts ii. 22. John i. 30. John viii. 40. † Is. vii. 14.

have failed to overthrow. They know well, that we disclaim such consequences, and that our doctrine stands clear of them. The Deity was not born, but the man was born who is united to the Deity; the Deity was not imprisoned in the body of an infant, but He was a child in his human nature, who, in his Divine, fills heaven and earth; the Deity did not die, but we have the authority of Scripture for saying, that when Jesus of Nazareth suffered, the Lord of glory was crucified.

LECTURE XXXIII.

ON THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

PROOF OF THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—REASON OF THE NAME, SPIRIT.—HIS DIVINITY INFERRED FROM THE ASCRIPTION TO HIM OF THE NAMES, THE PERFECTIONS, AND WORKS OF GOD; AND FROM THE WORSHIP RENDERED TO HIM.—THE RELATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE OTHER TWO PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD.—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN CHURCHES.

HAVING endeavoured to prove, in some preceding lectures, the Deity of our blessed Redeemer, I purpose to lay before you the proofs of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

I begin with observing, that, although conclusive, they are not so numerous as in the former case; but it is not necessary that they should be equally ample. The great difficulty in admitting the Divinity of any other person but the Father, arises from the doctrine of the Unity, with which a plurality of subsistences in the Godhead seems to be inconsistent. As among men, three distinct persons, although partakers of a common nature, are not numerically one in essence, we are apt to apply this analogy to the Divine nature, and to think nothing clearer than that the supposition of two or more persons infers its division into as many parts. Trinitarians have, on this account, been frequently pronounced to be Tritheists. The only way of removing this difficulty, is to shew from the infallible declarations of Scripture, that however incomprehensible the doctrine is, and whatever repugnance may be imagined in it to the dictates of reason, the Son is God, as well as the Father. We thus oppose positive proof to presumptions, and set aside the bold and ignorant conclusions of

our finite minds concerning an infinite essence, by the express testimony of Him to whom that essence belongs. If we succeed in establishing the fact that the Son is God, we prepare the way for the admission of a third person in the Trinity, not without proof, but upon evidence not equally luminous and diversified. The great objection against believing that there is a plurality in the Divine nature, is removed by shewing that it is reconcileable with the Unity, because it actually exists; and, being compelled to acknowledge the Deity of the Son, we are the more easily persuaded to acknowledge that of the Spirit. My meaning will be illustrated by reminding you, that it would require more evidence to convince us of a first fact different from any which we had experienced, and therefore apparently incredible, than it would require to convince us of a second fact of the same kind, although, with respect to the second, we should still demand that the evidence be sufficient. This I consider as the reason why the Scriptures, while they teach the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, do not speak so fully upon it as upon the Divinity of the Son.

The point which it is necessary to consider, in the first place, is the personality of the Spirit. In other words, we must inquire whether he is a person, intelligent and active, or merely, as some affirm, an influence, virtue, or divine operation. It is admitted, that this is sometimes the meaning of the word, Spirit, in the Scriptures; or that, by a metonymy, the name is used to denote the effect which the Spirit produces upon the soul. Thus, the passages which speak of the "pouring out" of the Spirit, of his being "received," and of being "filled" with him, have been understood to signify nothing more, than that miraculous or sanctifying gifts are bestowed upon men. But, allowing that this view of such passages is just, I observe, that there are many places of Scripture in which he is manifestly spoken of as a person, or properties and actions are ascribed to him, which could be predicated only of a person. Understanding and volition are assigned to him; the first, when he is said to "know the things of God," and to "search all things, yea, even the deep things of God;"* the second, in the following words: "But all

* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

these," that is, the gifts enumerated in the preceding verses, "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." * Affections are figuratively attributed to him as well as to the Father, when, for example, we are exhorted not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." † Who ever heard of the grief of a quality? We are informed, that "the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered;" ‡ and we can understand, it has been remarked, what are interceding persons, but have no apprehension of interceding and groaning qualities. "The Comforter," says our Lord, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." || "When the Comforter is come—he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness." § "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." ¶ In this passage, he is represented as performing many personal acts. He teaches the disciples of Christ, and enables them to recollect what they had heard from the lips of their Master; he testifies of Christ as literally as the Apostles testified of him; he guides believers into the truth; he speaks what he has heard; he gives them the knowledge of future events.

It is acknowledged by the adversaries of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, that, in these and other passages, which might have been mentioned, he is spoken of as a person; but they evade their force by alleging that, in the style of the Scriptures, personal properties and actions are sometimes ascribed to things. Hence it is said of charity, that it suffers long and is kind, envies not, vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, ** &c. These things are attributed to charity, which is a quality, because they are true of the charitable man. In like manner, the Holy Ghost is represented as performing personal acts,

* 1 Cor. xii. 11. † Eph. iv. 30. ‡ Rom. viii. 26. || John xiv. 26.

§ John xv. 26, 27. ¶ John xvi. 13, 14. ** 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c.

although he is not a person, but the power or virtue of the Father, because it is the Father who performs these acts by his own power, which is called the Holy Ghost. But this answer, however plausible, is not satisfactory. It might be worthy of attention, if all the acts which are attributed to the Spirit, might be performed by the power of the Father; but, if some of those acts are such as cannot be predicated of the Father, if he cannot be said to do by his own power all that is done by the Spirit, then it follows, that the Holy Ghost is a person. There is nothing in the account of charity, which is not descriptive of the charitable man; but there are some things affirmed of the Holy Ghost, which are not true of the Father; and hence it appears that he is personally distinct from him.

To make intercession, is the act or work of a person, and is attributed to the Spirit, who "makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."* It is plain that he makes intercession for them to the Father, and equally plain that it would be absurd to speak of the Father as making intercession to himself. With this absurdity the hypothesis of our opponents is chargeable, because they maintain that the Spirit is merely the power or operation of the Father; but, upon our supposition, every thing is clear, because it is one person who intercedes with another. To come in consequence of a commission received from another, is a personal act, and is attributed to the Spirit in the passages quoted above. But it could not be said of the Father, that he comes as the messenger or missionary of another, for there is no other by whom he can be sent; and there would be an evident impropriety and confusion in representing him as coming in the name of the Son, while the Son is uniformly described as coming in his name; not as sending him, but as sent by him. If any man shall suppose the meaning to be, that the Father sends his power by the authority, and under the direction of his Son, and that his power, thus sent, teaches, guides, and compels, he must admit, that he has made a discovery which requires no small degree of ingenuity, and that a book, to understand which such an unnatural interpretation is necessary,

* Rom. viii. 27.

is written in defiance of the ordinary rules of composition, and apparently with an intention to mislead. Again, the Spirit is said to speak and hear; but these personal acts are attributed to him in a sense in which they cannot be attributed to the Father. *To hear*, when affirmed of him, signifies that he is commissioned by the Son to make certain communications concerning him to the world. "He shall receive of mine." * But how could such a thing be affirmed of the Father? The Spirit does not speak of himself, but speaks what he hears. † But the Father does every thing of himself; and therefore it is not true that the Holy Ghost is said to do these things because he is the power of the Father. It is plain, therefore, since acts are attributed to the Spirit which cannot be attributed to the Father, that the attempt to evade the argument from the passages formerly cited, is abortive; and that the Holy Ghost is not a quality or energy, but has a personal subsistence.

It may be proper, in this place, to inquire into the reason of the name or designation which is appropriated to the third person of the Trinity. He cannot be called the Spirit, on account of the spirituality of his essence; for as it is common to all the persons, one of them could not be denominated from it more than the others. "God is a Spirit." Whoever, therefore, has assigned this as the reason of the name, has given a proof of inaccurate thinking. *Spirit* is a Latin word adopted into our language, and synonymous with the Greek word *πνευμα*. Both literally signify, *breath* or *wind*. There cannot be conceived any allusion to their original meaning, when they are applied to the Divine essence, or to angelical beings; but breath has been supposed to be alluded to, when the third person in the Godhead is called the Spirit. This word is understood to refer to the mode of his subsistence, of which we shall afterwards speak, and which is usually termed *procession*, (from the words of our Lord, which we shall soon have occasion to quote) but by the Schoolmen was named *spiration*. As the second person is said to have been "begotten," so the third is said to have "proceeded," as the breath proceeds from the mouth. This idea is supposed to

* John xvi. 14.

† Ibid. 13.

be authorised by the action of our Saviour, who “breathed upon his disciples, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”* The Spirit is the breath of the Almighty. I make a similar remark upon the epithet, holy, as upon the term, spirit, that it is very inaccurate to suppose that it denotes the holiness of his nature, because holiness, being a property of the divine essence which belongs equally to all the persons, cannot be attributed to one of them by way of eminence or distinction. It would be as improper as always to call one of them wise, or almighty, or just, or good, while no such adjunct was connected with the names of the others. There can be little doubt, that the epithet, holy, refers to his official character. He is the Author of all the holiness which adorns the creation, and particularly in the economy of redemption he sustains the character of the Sanctifier: “We are saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”† He comes forth from the Father, to restore his image in the soul of man; and all the virtues and graces are the effects of his mighty operations.

Having proved the personality of the Holy Ghost, I proceed to inquire, whether there be evidence in the Scriptures that he is a Divine person, and not a creature, as some who admitted his existence have affirmed. The author of this heresy was Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the fourth century, who maintained, that the Spirit was not a partaker of the same honours with the Father and the Son, but was their *minister and servant*, *διακονος και υπηρετης*, as the angels are. It is thus that his doctrine is stated by Sozomen, in his Ecclesiastical History.‡

I shall begin with shewing you, that the same names are given to the Spirit, which are given to the Father and the Son. *JEHOVAH*, you know, is the incommunicable name; and, importing underived, independent, and immutable existence, it does not admit of application to a creature. The evidence is not so distinct as in the case of our Saviour; but, that the Spirit is called *JEHOVAH*, may be inferred from the following passages. Compare Exodus xvii. 7. with Heb. iii. 9.

* John xx. 22.

† Tit. iii. 5.

‡ Lib. iv. c. 26.

In the former place, it is said, that "the name of the place was called Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted JEHOVAH, saying, is JEHOVAH among us, or not?" In the latter you read, "wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of temptation, when your fathers tempted me, and proved me." Compare, again, Isaiah vi. 8—10, with Acts xxviii. 5. "I heard the voice of JEHOVAH saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The prophet answered, "Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, and understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." Now, observe how the Apostle Paul quotes the passage: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive," &c. Compare, once more, Jeremiah xxxi. 31—34, with Heb. x. 15—17. The passages are too long to be quoted; but, in them, as in those already recited, what is spoken by JEHOVAH in the Prophet, is said by the Apostle to have been spoken by the Holy Ghost. I do not affirm, that the argument from these passages is perfectly conclusive, and particularly from the passage in Isaiah, which is expressly applied to our Saviour by the Evangelist John; but the regular substitution of the Holy Ghost for JEHOVAH in them all, affords some ground at least, for believing that he is entitled to the former name, and, consequently, is that mysterious Being, who comprehends in himself the past, the present, and the future.

That the Holy Ghost is called God, I shall prove from two passages. The first is in the fifth Chapter of the Acts, where Peter, having said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" asks again, "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." According to Peter, to lie to the Holy Ghost, is to lie to God; to lie to the Holy Ghost is not to lie to man, because the Holy Ghost is not man; and not to lie to an angel, because the Holy Ghost is not an

angel ; nor to lie to any creature, because the Holy Ghost is not a creature ; but to lie to God, because the Holy Ghost is God. If the Spirit were not God, the Apostle might have said, “ thou hast not lied unto the Holy Ghost, but unto God,” for this would have been the proper manner of distinguishing them, and also of pointing out the greatness of his sin. But, since he first told him his sin, which was lying to the Holy Ghost, and then declared its aggravation, that he had not lied unto men but to God, it is plain that the Holy Ghost, to whom he lied, is God. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says to them, “ Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?” * and in another place, “ What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ?” † From both passages it is plain, that the reason why they were the temple of God was, that the Holy Ghost dwelt in them. But, the inference would not be just, if the Holy Ghost were a creature ; they might be his temple, and not be the temples of God. A temple is the habitation of the Deity ; but there is no way in which we are his habitation, except by the presence of his Spirit. Now, if the presence of the Spirit is the presence of God, it follows, that the Spirit is God. It is evident, that he is so denominated by the Apostle, who in one verse calls believers the temple of the Holy Spirit, and in another verse, the temple of God.

The next argument for the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, is founded upon the ascription of Divine perfections to him. Where the qualities or properties are found, there is the essence to which they belong. He is represented as possessing the attribute of eternity in the following words : “ How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God !” ‡ There is a difference of opinion about the words, “ the eternal Spirit,” by which some understand the Divine nature of Christ, through which he offered himself, that is, through which his oblation was rendered infinitely valuable. But his Divine nature is not so expressed in any other passage of Scripture :

* 1 Cor. iii. 16.

† 1 Cor. vi. 19.

‡ Heb. ix. 14.

this sense of the phrase is not the natural one, or the sense which would first present itself to our minds; and the connexion does not necessarily lead to it, but rather suggests the idea of the Holy Ghost, through whose sanctifying influences he offered himself without spot, or his human nature was made a pure immaculate sacrifice. He is the eternal Spirit, from everlasting to everlasting God.—Another attribute of Deity, is immensity, or omnipresence, which, if I may speak so, is a modification of immensity, or the infinite essence of the Deity considered in relation to the system of created things. God is present in every part of the universe. It is certain, therefore, that the Spirit is God, for these are the words of the Psalmist: “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” * Wherever God is, the Spirit is. The Father and the Spirit co-exist throughout all time, and in all space.—A third Divine perfection, of which the Spirit is possessed, is omniscience. “The Spirit,” says Paul, “searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” † That searching here signifies knowing, is evident from the preceding part of the verse, in which it is said that God had revealed to the Apostle the mysteries of salvation by the Spirit; and from the next verse, in which Paul obviously intends to explain his meaning: “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” ‡ Omniscience is expressly ascribed to him, when he is said to search or know all things; but, lest any person should suspect that these are only created things, he adds, yea, the deep things of God, the secrets with which none was acquainted but himself. When the Apostle asks, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord?” || we must answer, no man knows it, nor any angel; but it is known to the Spirit, and therefore he is God.—I might mention also, almighty power; but the illustration of this particular will be given under the next division, to which I proceed.

The third argument for the Divinity of the Spirit, is

* Ps. cxxxix. 7—10.

† 1 Cor. ii. 10.

‡ Ib. 11.

|| Ib. 16.

taken from the works which he performs, and which pre-suppose the Worker to be omnipotent. Some passages of Scripture represent him as concerned in Creation: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."* As the original word signifies both spirit and wind, some have supposed that nothing more is meant by the inspired historian, than that a mighty wind, in the Hebrew idiom a wind of God, agitated the newly created chaos. Wind is the atmosphere in motion; but, it is questionable whether the atmosphere existed at this time, and its production seems rather to have been the work of the second day, when the firmament was made; for the firmament, or expanse, as the word may be rendered, seems to be the air, from the office assigned to it, namely, to divide the waters from the waters. This separation is effected by the atmosphere, which bears aloft the water that has been exhaled from the ocean and the surface of the earth. If these remarks are just, it was not a wind, but the Spirit who moved upon the face of the deep; and, whatever is implied in this motion, it is certain that he was active in the formation of the material system. I quote another passage from the Psalms: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;" or rather, "by the Spirit of his mouth."† The Fathers thought (and many moderns are of the same opinion) that this verse refers to the co-operation of all the persons of the Trinity in the creation. The Word of the Lord, is not his simple command, but the Logos of the New Testament, his essential Word, by whom the Father made the worlds; and the breath of his mouth, is the Spirit of his mouth, the Divine person proceeding from him, of whose agency in this work Moses has given us a general account. By him the host of heaven was made, comprehending the angels of light, and the glorious orbs which shine in the firmament. This sense of the words agrees with another passage in Job, where it is said, that "by his Spirit, God hath garnished the heavens,"‡ or adorned them with all their splendour. —That Providence also is his work, has been inferred from

* Gen. i. 2.

† Ps. xxxiii. 6.

‡ Job xxvi. 13.

the following words : “ Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.”* Creatures fade and die when their Maker withdraws his support; but as soon as the Spirit, the great vivifying principle, the Author of life natural and spiritual, imparts his influences, they revive.—But I proceed to remark, that miracles are represented as performed by his power : “ If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”† “ To another are given the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles;—all these worketh that one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will.”‡ A miracle is a suspension or alteration of the laws of nature, which God established in the beginning, and over which none has control but himself. It is as impossible for a creature to work a real miracle, as it is to create a world. We say, indeed, that they were performed by Prophets and Apostles; but we speak loosely, and according to appearance, for they were only the instruments by which superior power was exerted, and the real Worker of all miracles was God. If, then, miracles were wrought by the Spirit, he is greater than any creature, because the person is manifestly Divine who possesses the attribute of omnipotence.—Lastly, the resurrection of the dead, which is appropriated to God in the Scriptures, is ascribed to him. The true God is called “ God who quickeneth the dead;” and no person ever supposed that any created power is capable of reuniting the dust of the grave in its original form, and restoring the principle of life. This, however, the Holy Ghost will do at the last day. “ If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”||

The last argument for the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, is founded on the religious worship which is given to him. We are baptized in his name, as well as in that of the Father and the Son. His equality in dignity is declared by his association with them in this solemn act of religion. It is performed by his authority, as well as by theirs; and we are dedicated

* Ps. civ. 30. † Matth. xii. 28. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 9—11. || Rom. viii. 11.

as expressly to his service as to that of the other persons of the Trinity. We have an example of prayer to him in the following words, which are still used in the solemn benediction of the church: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."* Here, he is acknowledged as the source of spiritual blessings, as well as the Father and the Son, and is invoked in the same spirit of devotion. It is vain to call this merely a wish; it is as distinctly a prayer as any other which occurs in the Epistles; and there would be no question about its nature, if there were no design to evade the evidence of his personal dignity. The words of John, in the beginning of the Revelation, are also considered as a prayer to the Spirit: "Grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."† The Father and the Son are distinctly mentioned; but who are the seven spirits that are conjoined with them? If you say that they are created spirits, I would call upon you to produce an instance in which a creature is thus associated with God, and, as in the present case, is placed between two Divine persons as their equal. Besides, I would ask, what grace and peace a creature has to bestow, that he should be called upon to extend his favour to the church; and whether idolatry would not be carried to the greatest possible height, if a creature were set upon the throne of the living God, addressed in the same invocation, and pronounced to be equally able to bless us? Nothing more needs to be said, to prove that the seven spirits which are before the throne are not created spirits. It appears, then, that they cannot be understood to mean any other than the Holy Ghost. If you ask why he is represented as Seven Spirits, I answer, that seven is a favourite number in the Scriptures, and seems to be the number of perfection; and that this representation was probably intended to signify that the influences of the Holy Ghost are inexhaustible, and are suited to all the exigencies of the people of

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

† Rev. i. 4, 5.

God. Perhaps the number alludes to the seven churches of Asia, to which the introductory chapters of this book are addressed.

To sum up the arguments which have been advanced in support of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost: if he is designated by names peculiar to God, if Divine perfections are ascribed to him, if he has performed such works as manifestly surpass created power, and if religious worship is addressed to him, we are warranted to affirm that he is not a created spirit, but God over all, blessed for ever.

It remains to speak of the relation of the Holy Ghost to the other persons of the Godhead. His relation to the Father is called his procession from him; and the term is founded upon these words of our Saviour:—"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father,"—ὁ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται,—"he shall testify of me."* Hence the Greeks call it *ἐκπορεύσις*, and sometimes *προόδος*. No man can tell what "proceeding from the Father" means; it is equally unintelligible as is the generation of the Son. Attempts have been made to explain both terms; but, in doing so, ideas borrowed from material substances have been generally applied to the incomprehensible nature of a spiritual Being. The generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, have been understood to import that both "received their essence" from the Father. This mode of expression is common in the writings of the Fathers, and has been adopted from them by many modern Divines. I acknowledge that I am unable to conceive what idea they affix to the words; but, whether they be mere words without signification or not, they seem to suggest a notion incompatible with the absolute eternity and perfect equality of all the persons of the Godhead. If the Divine essence was communicated to the Son and the Spirit, the Father must be conceived as prior to both, whatever ingenuity may be displayed in talking of eternal emanations, and proving that the existence of the rays of the sun is co-eval with that of the sun himself. The subject is beyond the reach of our faculties; and it is presumptuous to attempt to

* John xv. 26.

explain it, especially by the introduction of terms which either mean nothing, or are calculated to mislead. We do not know what is the procession of the Spirit. Let us be sensible of our ignorance and acknowledge it, remembering, that as this is our duty, so it is more honourable than to indulge in vain babbling, and to darken counsel by words without knowledge. It is a proof of the folly of this mode of expression, that, being used with respect to the Spirit as well as to the Son, it makes the relation of both to the Father to be the same, while the Scripture plainly states a distinction between them, saying, that the one was begotten and the other proceeded. God must speak to us in our own language; and if he is pleased to give us any information respecting the mysteries of his essence, he must do so by terms to which we are accustomed. But it would be absurd to suppose, that they bear their usual sense in their new application. The utmost that can be conceived is an analogy, and that too a very faint one, between things finite and infinite. It is therefore a part of wisdom to abstain from explanations and commentaries, and to confine ourselves to the words of inspiration.

The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father. But it is nowhere said, that he proceeds from the Son; and hence it has been a subject of inquiry and dispute, whether he stands in the same relation to him as to the Father. The Greek Fathers strictly adhered to the language of Scripture, and affirmed, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, but did not say, that he proceeds from the Son. They, however, did not hesitate to say, that he "receives" from the Son. This expression the Latins understood to imply the same thing which they meant by procession, namely, that the Spirit received his essence from the Son; and accordingly they did not hesitate to make use of the term, when speaking of the Spirit as well as of the Father. Their words were different, but their ideas were substantially the same. But as this was one of the points which afterwards divided the Eastern and Western Churches, it is necessary to inform you how the controversy arose.

After Macedonius had vented his new heresy, denying the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, the Council of Constantinople,

A. D. 381, judged it necessary to make an addition to the article of the Nicene creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" which was enlarged thus, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Author of life, who proceeds from the Father." This creed was received by the Catholic Church; and it was afterwards enacted by the Council of Ephesus, that no addition should be made to it. But, in process of time the question began to be discussed in the West, whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son as well as the Father; and it being decided that he did, the new article was inserted in the creed by the Latins:—"Credimus in Spiritum Sanctum ex Patre Filioque procedentem." Hence, a violent controversy arose between them and the Greeks; which, being heightened by other grounds of dispute, terminated in their open separation from the communion of each other; the Greeks condemning the Latins for adding to the Creed an article contrary to the authority of the Councils, and the truth of which they suspected or denied; and the Latins obstinately retaining it, because it was sanctioned by the Pope, and expressed in their opinion a doctrine agreeable to Scripture, which the Greeks themselves had once admitted in different words.

In adding the words "*Filioque*" to the Creed, the Latins thought themselves justified by plain Scripture reasoning. Although the procession of the Spirit from the Son is not literally asserted, yet it is implied in some things which are said of him in relation to the Son. The same expressions, which are used concerning the Holy Ghost in reference to the Father, because he proceeds from him, are used in reference to the Son; and hence it seems warrantable to conclude that the reason is the same. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father, because he proceeds from him: "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."* But he is also called the Spirit of the Son; and there seems, therefore, to be no valid ground why we should not believe that the same relation is expressed in the one case and in the other: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."† Again, the

* Matth. x. 20.

† Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 9.

Holy Ghost is sent by the Father, because he proceeds from him,—it being suitable to the order of subsistence in the Godhead, that the Father should send him, not that he should send the Father. Our Lord speaks of him as the Comforter, whom the Father would send. But he is also sent by the Son :—“ When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you.” “ If I depart, I will send him unto you.” * If his mission by the Father is the consequence of his procession from him, may we not conclude, upon the same ground, that he also proceeds from the Son ?

Such are the reasons assigned by the Western Church for deviating from the language of the East and of the ancient creeds. There is a degree of probability in the reasoning ; but at the same time candour requires me to say, that, as we do not know what procession means, we perhaps venture too far when we positively affirm, that the expressions which we have quoted are equivalent to that term. It is only when we thoroughly understand a subject, that we have authority to pronounce that different modes of expression convey exactly the same idea. I presume that no man will affirm that he is thus qualified to decide the present controversy. He who is called the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son, does certainly appear to stand in the same relation to both ; and, if no other language had been used, there could have been but one opinion on the subject. But, when we find that this person is said to proceed from the Father, and is not said to proceed from the Son, we need not be surprised that some should hesitate whether it can be truly affirmed that he proceeds from the Son. If they acknowledge that he is true God, and is the Spirit of the Son, their refusing to say that he proceeds from him, should be accounted a venial error, and, if censured at all, should be censured with gentleness, as having arisen from a principle, which cannot justly be condemned, of scrupulous adherence to the language of Scripture. The Greeks might be wrong, in their violent condemnation of the Latins for adding the words *Filioque* to the creed ; but the Latins were at least as culpable, in accusing the Greeks of heresy, because they preferred their ancient phraseology. The La-

* John xv. 26, and xvi. 7.

tins had arguments on their side, deduced from the interpretation of particular passages; the Greeks had on their side the express language of Scripture itself. It was a controversy which, if it could not be avoided, both parties should have carried on with mildness, and in which they should have mutually exercised the spirit of forbearance. There was no heresy on either side; both were sound in the doctrine of the Trinity, and their difference related to a point which neither understood. Legitimate inferences from Scripture, are of the same authority with Scripture itself. But, when the inference is attended with a degree of doubt; when it is deduced from premises which are rather assumed than proved, it may be proposed to the consideration of others, but their assent to it should not be imperatively demanded. It may be true that the phrase, "the Spirit of the Father," is equivalent to the phrase, "proceedeth from the Father;" but, as this cannot be demonstrated, it would have been wiser not to have made a doctrine, founded upon the idea that they are equivalent, an article of faith. We have seen the grounds upon which it rests; but, while there is reason to believe that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, we should deem it rash to condemn the man who would not assent to this proposition, for this reason, that he could not find it so expressed in the Scriptures.

LECTURE XXXIV.

ON THE DECREES OF GOD.

CONNEXION BETWEEN THE KNOWLEDGE AND DECREES OF GOD.—NATURE AND OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE DECREES.—THEY ARE ETERNAL. WISE, FREE, ABSOLUTE, AND UNCONDITIONAL.—UNCONDITIONAL DECREES NOT INCONSISTENT WITH HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

HAVING spoken of God and his perfections, of the Holy Trinity, and the Divinity of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I now proceed to speak of the Acts of the Divine nature.

Of these, according to systematic Divines, there is a three-fold distinction. First, there are immanent and intrinsic acts which have no respect to any thing external. Such are the acts which are implied in the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit; and such are the acts of the Divine persons towards each other, of which their mutual love may be mentioned as an instance. The Divine nature, although single, is not solitary; it is the soul, if I may speak so, of communion more intimate and delightful than the closest fellowship among creatures; and thus it enjoys in itself a perpetual source of infinite blessedness. Secondly, there are extrinsic and transitive acts, which are not *in* God, but *from* God efficiently, and in creatures subjectively; or, to express the matter more intelligibly, are exertions of his power terminating upon creatures as the objects of them. To create, to uphold, and to govern, are acts of this kind. Thirdly, there are immanent and intrinsic acts in God, which have a respect or relation to things without

him ; and these are his Decrees, to which I shall direct your attention in this lecture.

The decrees of God are his purpose or determination with respect to future things. I call them purpose or determination, in the singular number, because there was only one act of His infinite mind about future things ; although we speak as if there had been many, in reference to the process of our own minds, which form successive resolutions, as thoughts and occasions arise, or in reference to the objects of his decree, which being many, seem to require a distinct purpose for each. But, an infinite understanding does not proceed by steps, as they necessarily do whose knowledge, like light, advances by degrees, and whose ideas come in a train ; it perceives all things by a single glance. “ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” *

This seems to be the place, in which it is proper to introduce a distinction, which is usually made, of the knowledge of God into the knowledge of simple intelligence, or natural and indefinite knowledge, *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* ; and the knowledge of vision, *scientia visionis*, which is also called free and definite. The former is the knowledge of things possible, and is called indefinite, because God has defined or determined nothing concerning them. God knows all possible causes, and all their possible effects. The latter is the knowledge of future things, of things which shall take place, and is called definite, because their existence is determined. They differ, you see, in their object ; that of the former, being all things that might exist ; that of the latter, being only such things as are to exist. The first kind of knowledge is founded on the omnipotence of God ; he knows all things which his power could perform. The second kind of knowledge is founded on his will or decree, by which things pass from a state of possibility to a state of futurity. God knew of innumerable worlds and orders of creatures which his power could have brought into being ; but he knew of them, not as things which were to be, but as things which might be. But, he knew of the universe which actually is, as certainly to have a future existence, because he had determined to create it. Lastly,

* Acts xv. 18.

these two kinds of knowledge differ in their order, because the former preceded his decree, and the latter is subsequent to it. Of the things which his Almighty power could accomplish, he purposed to do this and not that; and consequently, the one became certain, and the other remained only possible.

There is a third kind of knowledge, which some Divines have ascribed to God, and which is called *scientia media*, because it lies in the middle between the two kinds already explained, and differs from both. It differs from natural and indefinite knowledge, because it is conversant not about possible, but about future things; it differs from free and definite knowledge, because it is not founded upon the decree of God, but upon the actions of his creatures, which he foresees. He knows how men will act if placed in particular circumstances, if endowed with certain talents, if favoured with certain opportunities, if exposed to certain temptations. His knowledge is not the effect of his own purpose, but of the foresight of their character and condition; it is not derived from himself, but from his creatures. The design of introducing this distinction, was to give support to the doctrine, that the divine decrees which relate to men are conditional; or that, for example, men were chosen to eternal life upon the foresight of their faith and obedience; and hence it has been strenuously opposed by the advocates of unconditional decrees. They have endeavoured to shew, that it is a useless distinction, this middle science being comprehended in the knowledge of simple intelligence, or the knowledge of all possible things; that it solves no difficulties, but leaves the question, how God is not the author of sin? unanswered, since he placed Adam in circumstances in which he knew certainly that he would fall; that it renders God dependent upon his creatures, from whom part of his knowledge is derived, and by whose conduct his determinations are regulated; and that it exempts men from the control of their Maker, leaving them to act independently of any act of his will, or any prior arrangement of his wisdom, solely in the exercise of their own liberty. Some of these objections appear to have weight; but, perhaps, this *media scientia* might be so explained as to free it from them, and render it quite consistent with ortho-

doxy. Whether you give a distinct name to it or not, you might, one should think, say with the utmost safety, that God, whose understanding is infinite, knew in what manner men would act if placed in particular circumstances, and did place them in such circumstances, with a view to accomplish the design of his administration.

You will understand, by what has been said, the connexion between the knowledge and the decrees of God. When he decreed, he selected, if I may speak so, from the infinity of possible things, those which his wisdom judged proper to be done; and the things thus selected were henceforth future and certain.

No man will deny, that there are divine decrees, who believes that God is an intelligent being, and considers what this character implies. An intelligent being is one who knows and judges, who purposes ends and devises means, who acts from design, conceives a plan, and then proceeds to execute it. Fortune was worshipped as a goddess by the ancient heathens, and was represented as blind, to signify that she was guided by no fixed rule, and distributed her favours at random. Surely no person of common sense, not to say piety, will impute procedure so irrational to the Lord of universal nature. As he knew all things which his power could accomplish, there were undoubtedly reasons, which determined him to do one thing, and not to do another; and his choice, which was founded upon those reasons, was his decree. Upon this subject, we cannot avoid speaking of him after the manner of men; because, in endeavouring to conceive the acts of his mind, we necessarily refer to the operations of our own, however great is the difference between infinite and finite. When various plans are laid before us, and we prefer one to the rest, this act of our minds is a decree or purpose by which our subsequent conduct is regulated. The works of God, in like manner, necessarily presuppose a decree, as the plan of which they are the developement. It will certainly be admitted, that God intended to create the world before he actually created it; that he intended to make man before he fashioned his body, and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils; that he intended to govern the world which

he had made, according to certain laws ; and it will be farther admitted, that when he resolved to create the world, and to make man, and to establish laws physical and moral, he had some ultimate object in view. Having constructed a machine, and set it in motion, he knew what would be the result ; and this result was the true reason, or the final cause, why the machine was constructed. This intention of the Deity is his decree. To this general idea of a decree no man can object, whatever difficulties may occur in the detail of the doctrine, because it is as simple, and as necessarily forced upon our minds, as the idea of a purpose in the mind of a wise man, preceding an enterprise in which he embarks, or a particular mode of life which he adopts. In fine, the decree of God is his will, in which the exertions of his power, and the manifestations of his other perfections, originated. When we speak of his decreeing or purposing, we mean nothing mysterious and profound, but merely, that before he acted, he willed to act, that his operations *ad extra* were not the effects of necessity, but of counsel and design.

The Scriptures make mention of the decrees of God in many passages, and in a variety of terms. They speak of his foreknowledge, his purpose, his will, the determinate counsel of his will, his good pleasure, and his predestination : Christ, says an apostle, “ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”* “ Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.”† “ He hath made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself.”‡ “ He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”|| It is unnecessary to multiply quotations. There are two remarks which I would make upon the language of Scripture : First, when it represents the decrees of God as his counsel, the word is not to be understood in its usual acceptation, as implying consultation with others, or reflection, comparison, the deduction of inferences from premises, and the establishment of a conclusion as the result of the previous process. This slow procedure suits our limited faculties, but the decisions of an infinite mind are instantaneous. His decrees are called his

* Acts ii. 23.

† Rom. viii. 29.

‡ Eph. i. 9.

|| Ibid. 11.

counsel, to signify that they are consummately wise. Secondly, when they are called his will, it is not meant to insinuate, that they are arbitrary decisions ; but merely, that in making his decrees, he was under no control, and acted according to his own sovereignty. When a man's will is the rule of his conduct, it is usually capricious and unreasonable ; but wisdom is always associated with will in the divine proceedings ; and accordingly his decrees are said to be the " counsel of his will."

A question has been agitated upon this subject, which is very abstruse, and of which I almost despair of being able to convey a clear idea to you, as I am not sure that I distinctly understand it. It relates to the manner in which the decrees are in God, whether essentially, or inhesively and accidentally. The first is accounted the orthodox opinion. I know not how to explain it ; but it is affirmed that the decrees of God are not different from himself, and are identified with his essence, and that he never was without his decrees. If I have any glimpse of the meaning, it appears to be this, that in God there is nothing analogous to thought in man, which is not his soul itself, but an act of his soul. It is easy to put together words, which shall express this proposition ; but I doubt much whether any man can affix a distinct idea to it, with whatever confidence he may repeat it. You may say, that the decrees of God are God himself decreeing, and you may say the same thing of a man, that his decrees are the man himself decreeing ; the decrees, however, are not more identified with the essence in the one case, than in the other. We do not indeed understand the operations of an infinite mind, and they must be very different from those of our own ; but we would persuade ourselves and others that we do understand them, although it frequently happens, (and the present case, I think, is an instance,) that we darken counsel by words without knowledge. What is the meaning of decrees which are God himself ? or what can we infer from the assertion, that God could not be without his decrees, but that they were as necessary as his existence, and consequently, that it was necessary that the world should be created, and all the events should happen, which have taken place, or will take

place throughout an endless duration? There have been distinctions invented to support this opinion, and to answer objections; but I may spare myself and you the trouble of retailing them, as they would neither entertain nor instruct you.

The decrees of God relate to all future things without exception; whatever is done in time, was fore-ordained before the beginning of time. His purpose was concerned with every thing, whether great or small, whether good or evil; although, in reference to the latter, it may be necessary to distinguish between appointment and permission. It was concerned with things necessary, free, and contingent; with the movements of matter, which are necessary; with the volitions and actions of intelligent creatures, which are free; and with such things as we call accidents, because they take place undesignedly on our part, and without any cause which we could discover. It was concerned about our life, and our death; about our state in time, and our state in eternity. In short, the decrees of God are as comprehensive as his government, which extends to all creatures, and to all events. God did not merely decree to make man, and place him upon the earth, and then to leave him to his own uncontrolled guidance: he fixed all the circumstances in the lot of individuals, and all the particulars which will compose the history of the human race from its commencement to its close. He did not merely decree that general laws should be established for the government of the world, but he settled the application of those laws to all particular cases. Our days are numbered, and so are the hairs of our heads. We may learn what is the extent of the Divine decrees from the dispensations of providence, in which they are executed. The care of Providence reaches to the most insignificant creatures, and the most minute events, the death of a sparrow, and the fall of a hair. Some, indeed, talk of a general providence, by which I know not well what they mean, unless it be to save the Almighty the trouble of entering into details, and to burden him only with the office of upholding the general system. Hence they wisely tell us, that he takes care of the species, but not of the individuals; not perceiving that it is hardly possible to express a greater ab-

surdity in fewer words. A species is a general name by which the common and distinguishing qualities of a number of individuals are denoted. The species is nothing but the individuals under a particular classification. How then can the species be taken care of, if the individuals be neglected? In the same way, to allude to a familiar instance, in which a man would take care of his pounds who took no care of his pence. The notion of a general, to the exclusion of a particular providence, is irrational, as well as unscriptural. It is only by attending to individuals, and the regulation of minute affairs, that the business of the world can be carried on. We may say of providence, as the Psalmist says of the sun, that nothing is hidden from its heat, that its influence pervades the whole system of things. As God works all things according to the counsel of his will, we infer from his works what his counsel is, as we judge of an architect's plan by inspecting the building which was raised under his directions.

I proceed to lay before you some of the properties of the Divine decrees. And, in the first place, I remark, that they were made from eternity. This is readily granted with respect to some of the decrees, those, for example, which relate to the creation of the world and of man, and to the mission of Jesus Christ; but, it has been maintained, that those, which relate to things dependent upon the free agency of man, are made in time. This opinion, however, is so far from receiving any countenance from Scripture, that it is directly contradicted by it. It is expressly affirmed that believers were chosen in Christ, and that grace was given to them, "before the world began." * When an Apostle says, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," † he virtually teaches that his decrees are eternal; for his words import, that at the commencement of time the plan was arranged, according to which his works were to be executed. It is manifest that, if they had not been determined upon, they could not have been foreknown as certain. To suppose any of the Divine decrees to be made in time, is to suppose that some new occasion has occurred, some unforeseen event or combination of circumstances has taken place, which has in-

* Eph. i. 4. 2 Tim. i. 9.

† Acts xv. 18.

duced the Most High to pronounce a new sentence, or form a new resolution. If he knew from eternity all that he knows in time, no reason can be assigned why he should have delayed his arrangements so long. Temporal decrees suppose the knowledge of the Deity to be limited, and that he is receiving accessions to it in the progress of time. He comes to a resolution respecting men, after he has found what part they would act in particular circumstances. No man, who believes that the Divine understanding is infinite, comprehending the past, the present, and the future, will ever assent to the doctrine of temporal decrees. And is there any thing which God does not know? Is he ignorant of events which depend upon human volitions? No; he has foretold them in innumerable instances; prophecy is founded upon his infallible prescience, and shews that all things were certain to him from the beginning, and were so settled that they could not be changed. Although we cannot understand what is meant by identifying God's decrees with his essence, yet we have no hesitation in fixing their date in eternity.

In the second place, The divine decrees are wise. Wisdom is discovered in the selection of the most proper ends, and of the fittest means of accomplishing them. That this character belongs to the decrees of God, is evident from what we know of them. They are disclosed to us by their execution; and every proof of wisdom in the works of God, is a proof of the wisdom of the plan in conformity to which they are performed. It is, indeed, but a very small part of them which falls under our observation; but, we ought to proceed here as we do in other cases, and judge of the whole by the specimen, of what is unknown, by what is known. He who perceives works of admirable skill in the parts of a machine, which he has an opportunity to examine, is naturally led to believe that the other parts are equally admirable. In this manner we should satisfy our minds, when doubts obtrude themselves upon us, and repel the objections which may be suggested by some things which we cannot reconcile to our notions of what is expedient and proper. As far as we can go, every thing is worthy of God; why should we not believe, that beyond the point which bounds our researches, there is the same order,

the same beauty, the same correspondence with the Divine character and attributes? Convinced as we are by experience, that the plans of the Almighty are the result of consummate intelligence, ought we not, while we stand at the brink of the abyss which we cannot fathom, to exclaim in the language of profound reverence and humble adoration: "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"* Incomprehensible as are the counsels of God, we may be assured that no part of them is the effect of caprice, or of mere will, but that to his mind there appeared a sufficient reason for every thing which he purposed to do. Some have said, that as his knowledge is infinite, and his wisdom perfect, he must have discerned among possible events which was the best, and have chosen accordingly; and consequently, that the actual system of things is the best possible system. In this manner, they account for the permission of moral evil, and for the creation of such a being as man, although God foresaw that he would abuse his liberty, and involve a whole race in guilt and misery. A system pregnant with such consequences, was preferred, because it was, upon the whole, better than any other. When we reflect upon the wonderful dispensation which has resulted from the fall, and by which God is glorified in the highest, we are almost disposed to assent to this theory; but it seems to be a speculation beyond the reach of our faculties. It is an attempt to soar to a region too pure and sublime for us to breathe in it. Let us be content to move in a lower sphere, and to trace the evidences of wisdom with which we are surrounded there, and by which we shall feel this truth deeply impressed upon our minds, that God is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

In the third place, The decrees of God are free: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?"† He was alone when he made his decrees, and his determinations were influenced by no external cause. He

* Rom. xi. 33.

† Is. xl. 13, 14.

was free to decree, or not to decree, and to decree one thing, and not another. This liberty we must ascribe to Him who is supreme, independent, and sovereign in all his dispensations. In settling the notion of human liberty, Calvinistic divines maintain against Arminians, that it does not consist in a power to act with motives, or without them, or in opposition to them; but in the power of acting according to the prevailing inclination, or according to the motive which appears strongest to the mind. Human volitions are not arbitrary, but are influenced by the previous state of the mind. A man chooses what appears to be good, and he chooses it necessarily, in this sense, that he could not do otherwise. The object of every volition, is to please himself; and to suppose a man to have any other object, that is, to will any thing which does not please him in itself, or in its circumstances, is absurd; it is to suppose him to will, and not to will at the same time. He is perfectly voluntary in his choice; but his willingness is the consequence of the view which his mind takes of the object presented to it, or of his prevailing disposition. If we apply this reasoning to God, it will follow that his decrees are not the result of mere will, but of will under the direction of wisdom; and as, in human deliberations, the strongest motive prevails, so in the Divine counsels that system of things was preferred which appeared to be best. Advance a step farther, and you will say, that God could not have chosen any other system, more than a man can act in opposition to the strongest motive, while he is feeling the full force of its influence. Observe now the consequence of the conclusion at which we have arrived. It is this, that the decrees of God could not have been different from what they are. But, are we prepared to admit this conclusion? Shall we believe that God could not have made this world, in any respect, different from what it is; that he could not have placed man in such circumstances as would have prevented his fall; and that, when man had fallen, he could not have abstained from glorifying himself by his salvation? Surely we have cause to suspect the reasoning which leads to a belief so contrary to Scripture, and so injurious to the feelings of piety. God might, or might not, have created the world; he might have confirmed man

in a state of holiness, as well as have permitted him to fall; he might have withheld his Son, his only-begotten Son, and left the human race to perdition; and having given his Son, he might have saved more, or saved fewer, than shall be actually redeemed by him. We are ignorant of the reasons of his choice, but we cannot persuade ourselves that they are such, that no other choice could have been made. We assert, then, that the decrees of God are free. No necessity can be supposed to influence the procedure of a self-existent and independent Being, except the necessity arising from his infinite perfections, of always acting in a manner worthy of himself. To his infinite understanding there must have appeared more than one way of doing so; and although there were undoubtedly reasons for the choice which he has made, it would be boldness, not to be vindicated from the charge of impiety, to say that he could not have adopted another.

I remark once more, that the decrees of God are absolute and unconditional. The execution of them is not suspended upon any condition which may, or may not, be performed. Here we have many opponents, Lutherans, Arminians, Jesuits; all, in a word, who have not adopted those views of the subject which are usually called Calvinistic. It is granted, that some of the decrees of God are conditional, in this sense, that something is supposed to go before the event which is the object of the decree, and that, this order being established, the one will not take place without the other. He decreed, for example, to save Paul and the companions of his voyage to Italy; but he decreed to save them only on condition that the sailors should remain in the ship.* He has decreed to save many from the wrath to come; but he has decreed to save them only if they believe in Christ, and turn by him from the error of their ways. But these decrees are conditional only in appearance. They merely state the order in which the events should be accomplished; they establish a connexion between the means and the end, but do not leave the means uncertain. When God decreed to save Paul and his companions, he decreed that the sailors should be prevented from leaving the ship; and accordingly gave Paul previous

* Acts xxvii.

notice of the preservation of every person on board. When he decreed to save those who should believe, he decreed to give them faith; and accordingly we are informed, that those whom he predestinated he also calls into the fellowship of his Son.* That any decree is conditional in the sense of our opponents,—that it depends upon the will of man, of which he is sovereign master, so that he may will or not will as he pleases,—we deny. “My counsel,” says God, “shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”† But he could not speak so, if his counsel depended upon a condition which might not be performed. He might desire the event for his own glory or the good of his creatures, and take measures to accomplish it; but, as the ultimate determination depended upon the human will, over which he had no control, it would be uncertain till the moment arrived what the issue would be. He might wish to save a particular person; but, as that person might believe or not believe, it could not be known beforehand how he would act, and the design of God with respect to him might be frustrated. If you assert conditional decrees, you must suppose that God is ignorant of the result, that the event is not in his power, or that he has determined nothing concerning it, and has left it to chance. But “known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world.”‡ It is evident that they could not be known, if they had not been unconditionally decreed; because, on the contrary supposition, they would be the objects, not of knowledge, but of conjecture. “He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”§ But this could not be, if the will of his creatures sometimes counteracted his will, if the execution of his purposes was suspended upon a co-operation which it was in their power to withhold. It will be shewn afterwards, that those acts of the human will, upon which his decrees are supposed to be suspended, are under his direction, and are comprehended in his decrees; which, as we have already observed,* while they appointed the end, also provided the means.

Here we come to a question which has engaged the attention, and exercised the ingenuity, and perplexed the wits of men in every age. If God has fore-ordained whatsoever

* Rom. viii. 30. † Is. xlv. 10. ‡ Acts xv. 18. § Eph. i. 11.

comes to pass, the whole series of events is necessary, and human liberty is taken away. Men are passive instruments in the hands of their Maker; they can do nothing but what they are secretly and irresistibly influenced to do; they are not, therefore, responsible for their actions; and God is the Author of sin. To this objection it is replied, that the divine decree is extrinsic to the human mind; that it exerts no force or influence upon our faculties; and that, while it insures the futurition of events, it leaves them to be accomplished in the exercise of our liberty. While it determines that some things should be brought to pass necessarily, it determines that other things should be brought to pass freely. God has decreed, not only that men should act, but that they should act freely, and agreeably to their rational nature. He determined the act; but, men being free agents, it was possible, in respect of their liberty abstractly considered, that they might act differently. When, however, you have reflected upon this answer, and stripped it of its technical form, you will find that it amounts to nothing. It just says, that, notwithstanding the decree of God, man retains his liberty of action; and, consequently, puts us off with an assertion under the pretext of giving us an explanation. Believing that all things are immutably fixed in the divine counsels, we wish to know how the predestination is consistent with liberty. To what purpose is it to tell us, that God has decreed that some things shall take place necessarily, and other things freely? What information does this answer give us? what doubt does it solve? Still the question remains, How can those actions be free, which were so fixed that they could not be avoided?

It is a more intelligible method to explain the subject by the doctrine, which makes liberty consist in the power of acting according to the prevailing inclination, or the motive which appears strongest to the mind. Those actions are free which are the effect of volition. In whatever manner the state of mind which gave rise to the volition has been produced, the liberty of the agent is neither greater nor less. It is his will alone which is to be considered, and not the means by which it has been determined. If God fore-ordained certain actions, and placed men in such circumstances that

the actions would certainly take place agreeably to the laws of the mind, men are nevertheless moral agents, because they act voluntarily, and are responsible for the actions which consent has made their own. Liberty does not consist in the power of acting or not acting, but in acting from choice. The choice is determined by something in the mind itself, or by something external influencing the mind; but, whatever is the cause, the choice makes the action free, and the agent accountable. If this definition of liberty be admitted, you will perceive that it is possible to reconcile the freedom of the will with absolute decrees; but we have not got rid of every difficulty. By this theory, human actions appear to be as necessary as the motions of matter according to the laws of gravitation and attraction; and man seems to be a machine, conscious of his movements, and consenting to them, but impelled by something different from himself.

Upon such a subject, no man should be ashamed to acknowledge his ignorance. We are not required to reconcile the divine decrees and human liberty. It is enough to know that God has decreed all things which come to pass, and that men are answerable for their actions. Of both these truths we are assured by the Scriptures; and the latter is confirmed by the testimony of conscience. We feel that, although not independent upon God, we are free; so that we excuse ourselves when we have done our duty, and accuse ourselves when we have neglected it. Sentiments of approbation and disapprobation in reference to our own conduct or that of other men, would have no existence in our minds if we believed that men are necessary agents. But the tie which connects the divine decrees and human liberty is invisible. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it."* If every thing in religion were level to the comprehension of reason, there would be no room for faith. It is better to believe humbly, than to reason presumptuously. And presumptuous all those reasonings may be called, which lead to the denial of the immutability of the divine counsels, or of the freedom of the human will; which make man a machine, and God the author of sin.

* Ps. cxxxix. 6.

It is worthy of attention, that the great objection against unconditional decrees, that they are inconsistent with the liberty of action, is not removed by denying them, if it be granted at the same time, that our actions are foreknown. The foreknowledge of God is not conjecture, or probable calculation, but distinct and infallible prevision of future events. Whatever is the foundation of his foreknowledge, what he does foreknow will undoubtedly take place. Here, then, the actions of men are as unalterably fixed from eternity, as if they had been the subject of an immutable decree. I would ask, therefore, how they are more free in the one case than in the other? Absolute decrees are objected to because they render human actions necessary; that is, having been fore-ordained, they must take place, and cannot be avoided. But there is the same strong necessity, in consequence of foreknowledge. Actions which were certainly foreknown, will certainly take place; and it is as impossible to avoid them, as it is to pluck the sun from the firmament. Thus, in endeavouring to escape one difficulty, we run into another equally formidable. *Incidit in Scyllam, qui vult vitare Charybdin.*

The rejection of absolute decrees is intended to pave the way for the establishment of that kind of liberty which consists in the self-determining power of the will, or is the consequence of the admission of such liberty. Arminians maintain, that after all motives have been presented to his mind, a man retains the power of complying with them or resisting them, that the will remains in a state of indifference, and inclines to the one side or the other by its own sovereign choice. Absolute decrees overturn this notion of liberty from the foundation. It is evident that actions are not contingent; that is, it is not true that they may or may not be, if they are predetermined. But it is equally evident that they are not contingent, if they are foreknown. If God foresees that an event will take place, its future existence is necessary; that is, it is impossible that it should not take place. It was as certain from all eternity that a good man would perform a virtuous action yesterday, as it is now certain that he did perform it. How, then, could that action be subject to the arbitrary decision of his will? How could it still be equally

possible that he might or might not perform it? On the supposition of simple fore-knowledge, even without any positive decree, the Arminian notion of liberty falls to the ground. It were well if the abettors of this system would consider, that the consequences, with which they charge the doctrine of absolute decrees, arise equally from their own doctrine of fore-knowledge. The objection, that they necessitate human actions, would cease to alarm them, and their minds would be disposed to assent to the doctrine of our Church, that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass." *

* West. Conf. chap. iii. § 1.

LECTURE XXXV.

ON PREDESTINATION.

PREDESTINATION DEFINED.—SYSTEMS OF THE SUPRALAPSARIANS, SUB-LAPSARIANS, AND ARMINIANS.—DECREE OF ELECTION.—ITS ETERNITY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND IMMUTABILITY.—ITS CONNEXION WITH THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST.—THIS DECREE NOT THE RULE OF HUMAN CONDUCT.

THE preceding Lecture was devoted to the consideration of the decrees of God. I endeavoured to prove that there are Divine decrees, or that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and to illustrate their properties or distinguishing characters. I shall now proceed to speak more particularly of those decrees which relate to his intelligent creatures.

They are commonly comprehended under the general title of Predestination. It is applicable, indeed, according to the import of the term, to all the purposes of God which determine beforehand what is to come to pass; but it is usually limited to those purposes of which the spiritual and eternal state of man is the object.

It is evident from reason, that the Divine decrees relate also to angels, and it is inferred from that passage of Scripture in which the elect angels are mentioned.* As they were created by the power of God, so it was not without an act of his will that some of them stood, and others were permitted to fall. We cannot suppose the angelical order to have been left out of his plan, any more than the human race, or created

* 1 Tim. v. 21.

will to have acted with more independence and sovereignty in the one case than in the other. But, as the Scriptures have said little on this subject, we should have no assistance in pursuing the inquiry but the feeble light of our own minds, and should be encumbered by greater difficulties than those which attend the decrees of God in relation to man. We shall therefore pass to the consideration of the latter, on which our information is more ample, and which it is manifest are not, like the former, a subject of mere speculation ; for, although the decrees are not a rule of conduct to us, they are calculated to awaken sentiments of piety, and are represented as furnishing ample grounds of admiration, gratitude, consolation and hope to believers.

The term, predestination, includes the decrees of election and reprobation. Some, indeed, confine it to election ; but there seems to be no sufficient reason for not extending it to the one as well as to the other, as in both the final condition of man is pre-appointed, or predestinated. Upon a subject so abstruse, it is not wonderful that there should be a diversity of opinion, especially when, instead of implicitly acquiescing in the dictates of revelation, men begin to reason and to judge of the proceedings of an infinite Being by their own notions of wisdom and fitness. I shall lay before you a short account of the different systems which have been espoused by divines of different denominations.

The first is that of the Supralapsarians, who maintain, that, as what is last in accomplishment is first in the intention of a wise man, the object of God in his eternal decrees was the manifestation of his infinite perfections, and particularly of his mercy and justice, in the happiness of some of his creatures and the misery of others. To accomplish this design, he decreed to create man after his own image, but to place him in such circumstances that his fall would necessarily follow ; to send his Son to die upon the cross for the salvation of those whom he had chosen, and to give them effectual grace to convert and sanctify them, while the rest should be delivered up to blindness and impenitence. According to this system, as the name of those by whom it is adopted imports, the Divine decrees had no respect to the fall of man,

except as it was the means of executing them. Men were elected or rejected without any consideration of the fall, and were viewed by God, not as sinners, but simply as creatures. God thought only of his own glory, and all the events which take place in time, the creation of man, his apostasy, and his recovery, are so many steps in the process. While we must concede to this system the praise of consistency, by which I mean the regular disposition and close connexion of its parts, our minds revolt from the idea of such absolute sovereignty as appears in the destination of intelligent creatures to everlasting misery, not only before they had actually committed sin, but prior to the consideration of it. We startle at the thought of the destruction of immortal creatures being appointed by God, solely for the purpose of glorifying his name, and at the formal and direct introduction of sin as the fittest expedient for exhibiting him in his various characters of excellence to the admiration of the universe. We begin to grow giddy at the elevation to which we have ventured to soar. We experience a confusion of ideas, and know not well what to think. We are at a loss to determine whether justice in God be the same in kind with justice in man, and whether we should regard him as the affectionate and bountiful Parent of the human race, or as a despot, whose arbitrary will is his law, and who sports with their interests and feelings solely for his pleasure.

The Sublapsarians agree with the Supralapsarians in holding, that God has chosen some to life, and doomed others to death; that he decreed to send his Son to die for the former, and to give them his effectual grace; and that this purpose was eternal; but they differ from them with respect to the character in which the objects of his purpose were considered, affirming that they were regarded, not simply as creatures, but as sinners. God, having foreseen from all eternity that man, whom he intended to create after his own image, would fall from a state of innocence, elected some of the human race to everlasting life, and left the rest to perish in their sins. The advantage which this system proposes is, that, the objects of the decree being considered as guilty, the same objection cannot be urged against the rejection or preterition of some of

them, as in the former case, where all were considered as innocent. It is alleged, indeed, by Supralapsarians, that it admits a conditional decree, predestination being founded upon the foresight of what man would do, and consequently, that it is encumbered with all the difficulties which accompany conditional decrees ; or that the decree is conditional only in appearance, God having previously decreed to permit man to fall. Future events cannot be foreseen, unless they be certain ; they cannot be certain, unless God have determined to bring them to pass. If, then, the fall of man was certainly foreseen, it was infallibly decreed. It was fixed from eternity ; it was a link in the chain of events, which was to terminate in the manifestation of the Divine glory. The Sublapsarian scheme removes no difficulty, but merely speaks in terms less offensive. It is virtually the same thing to say, that God decreed that Adam should fall, and then decreed to save some of his posterity, and leave others to perish ; as to say that God first decreed to save some, and condemn others, and then, in order to accomplish this design, decreed the fall of Adam, and the whole human race in him. As both parties appear to hold the same ideas upon the subject, it does not seem to be material in what order they are arranged. Whatever truth there may be in such observations, the Sublapsarian scheme has a milder aspect ; and although we cannot solve every difficulty, and reply to every objection, it seems wiser to adopt that mode of speaking on a subject so little understood, which is most consonant to our notions of the moral character of God.

The third system is that of the Arminians, or Remonstrants as they are also called, who deny absolute and unconditional decrees, and maintain, that whatever God has decreed respecting man, is founded upon the foresight of their conduct. Having foreseen without any decree, that Adam would involve himself and his posterity in sin and its consequences, he purposed to send his Son to die for them all, and to give them sufficient grace to improve the means of salvation ; and knowing beforehand, who would believe and persevere to the end, and who would not, he chose the former to eternal life, and left the latter in a state of condemnation. There has been a diversity of opinion among the holders of this general system ;

and some of them, who have gone so far, in support of their idea of the freedom of the will, as to maintain that human actions, being contingent, cannot be certainly foreseen, have been led to affirm, that the decrees of God respecting men are not eternal, but are made in time; that men are elected to eternal life after they have believed, but that, if they fall into a state of unbelief and impenitence, the sentence or decree is reversed.

The doctrine of our church is so expressed, that, without putting any unnatural construction upon the words, it might be supposed to be agreeable to the Supralapsarian scheme. I refer to the third chapter of the Confession of Faith, and to the explanation of the decrees in the Larger Catechism. The Shorter Catechism may be supposed to be modelled after the Sublapsarian scheme, as the fall is mentioned before election, and election seems to be represented as an act of God, following in order the consideration of the fall. We may therefore conclude, that it was not the intention of the Church to give any decision upon this controversy, and that every man is at liberty to arrange the decrees in that order which appears to him most agreeable to the language of Scripture, and to the views which it gives us of the perfections of God. And it is well, that there has been no attempt to dictate to us upon a subject so abstruse, and in a case where a difference of opinion may be held, not only with a good conscience, but without the slightest injury to the interests of piety and holiness. Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians are agreed in ascribing to God the glory of supreme dominion and sovereign grace, and in acknowledging, that his unmerited love is the source of all our blessedness in this world, and of all that we hope to enjoy in the world to come; "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." *

It will be the business of the subsequent part of this lecture, to shew that God did actually choose, before the foundation of the world, some of the human race to eternal life, and that he left the rest to perish in their sins.

Let us begin with Election, which may be defined to be the choice which God, in the exercise of sovereign grace,

* Rom. xi. 36.

made of certain individuals of mankind to enjoy salvation by Jesus Christ. This definition may be illustrated and confirmed by the following particulars.

First, God has chosen some to salvation in preference to others. Nothing would be more absurd, than to oppose this proposition, in the first instance, as inconsistent with the impartiality of the Supreme Being, or with his justice and goodness, while we have a safer mode of ascertaining whether it should be received or rejected, by examining the Scriptures. Is it contained in them, or may it be deduced from them by plain and necessary consequences? Now, I may appeal to every candid person, whether it is not the obvious import of those passages which speak of certain persons under the character of the elect, as chosen in Christ,* as chosen to salvation, † as predestinated to the adoption of sons, ‡ and to be conformed to the image of God's Son, || as elect according to the foreknowledge of God, § as vessels of mercy whom he hath before prepared unto glory.¶ Whatever else such phrases may imply, they manifestly refer to some act of God in relation to the persons designated, by which they are distinguished from others. When a choice is made, we must conceive that, of a number of persons, some are taken, and others are left. There can be no such thing as the election of a whole class, viewed as separated from every other class. Election is a relative term, and necessarily involves the idea of rejection. The election of which we speak cannot be considered merely as a general purpose to furnish mankind with the means of salvation. The term can bear no such meaning; and to use it in this sense, would be an example of abuse or perversion, to which it would not be easy to find a parallel. It is an express purpose to confer salvation upon certain individuals. It is not an election of characters, but of persons; that is, it is not a general design to give eternal life to those who shall believe and repent, but a specification of those who shall actually enjoy it. Hence their names are said to be written in heaven,** and to be written in the book of life. †† They are a class of persons, whom God foreknew; whom, in

* Rom. xvi. 13. † 2 Thess. ii. 13. ‡ Eph. i. 5. || Rom. viii. 29.
§ 1 Pet. i. 2. ¶ Rom. ix. 23. ** Heb. xii. 23. †† Phil. iv. 3. Rev. xiii. 8.

consequence of his foreknowledge, he calls, and distinguishes in his dispensation of grace, as he had previously distinguished them in his purpose. "Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." * God, who is independent, and owes nothing to his creatures, may give or withhold his favours according to his pleasure. If men have forfeited all claim to his regard, if they have fallen under his wrath, and might have been doomed to hopeless misery, there is not the shadow of injustice in the exercise of his mercy only to a portion of the criminals. When one man is exempted from punishment, no injury is done to his companions in condemnation, who are left to the vengeance of the law, because they richly deserved to suffer it, and do not become less guilty, because he is pardoned. The cry against election, as if it made God a respecter of persons, is a senseless one, and proceeds either from stupidity or malignity. He only is a respecter of persons, who confers favours upon some, and withholds them from others equally deserving; not he, who, where none has a claim upon him, disposes of his gifts, in the free exercise of the power over them which naturally belongs to him. May he not do what he will with his own?

Secondly, The election of certain persons to eternal life was made from eternity. Some indeed, as we have already mentioned, speak of an election which takes place in time; and only such an election is consistent with the other parts of their system. God, they say, purposed from eternity to send his gospel to men, and to save such of them as should believe it; but, as the determinations of the human will are sovereign, the persons who will obey the gospel must be unknown, until they are ascertained by the event, and their actual faith must precede their proper election. You perceive that this is the opinion of those who are led by their extravagant notions of liberty, to deny the Divine prescience of what they call contingent actions. But, to take no notice of the strange and impious tenet, so inconsistent with the absolute perfection of the

* Rom. xi. 5, 7.

Divine understanding, I observe, that an election in time is at direct variance with the doctrine of Scripture. “We are bound,” says Paul to the Thessalonians, “to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”* Some understand by “the beginning,” the beginning of the gospel, and suppose the Apostle to mean, that they were elected at the time when the gospel was first preached to them, and they believed it. But the absurdity of this opinion is manifest. Who can suppose that all the Thessalonians to whom the Epistle is directed, believed from the moment that the glad tidings were first proclaimed to them? Did it not happen in Thessalonica, as in other places, that some believed at first, and some afterwards, and that those who were to be saved, were gradually added to the Church? It is worthy of attention, that the words in the following verse—“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”—evidently import, that their call to the enjoyment of salvation was subsequent to their election; for the Apostle distinguishes between the two facts, asserting that they were chosen to salvation from the beginning, and then called to it by the gospel. It seems, therefore, more consonant to the whole passage, to assign to the term beginning, the sense which it bears in other passages, where it signifies eternity. “In the beginning was the Word.”† “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.”‡ But the following passages are more explicit, and their evidence can be set aside, only by such criticism as perplexes what is simple, and darkens what is clear. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”|| “He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”§ Infinite knowledge is a divine perfection. The eye of God sees at one glance the past, the present, and the future. No event

* 2 Thess. ii. 13. † John i. 1. ‡ Prov. viii. 23. || Eph. i. 4. § 2 Tim. i. 9.

occurs which he did not foresee ; no circumstance takes place, which did not enter into his plan. “ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” * All things relative to every individual of the human race were settled, long before man was created ; the number of the inhabitants of heaven was fixed, “ while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest parts of the dust of the world.”

In the third place, In the election of certain persons to eternal life, God did not proceed upon the ground of their foreseen qualifications. The choice was an act of his sovereignty. I would not be understood to insinuate, that the procedure of the Almighty was arbitrary, or that there was no reason why he preferred some to others, because he who acts without reason, acts without wisdom ; but I affirm, that the preference was not owing to any difference in the moral character of its objects. Many, who admit the doctrine of election, which is so clearly taught in the Scriptures, maintain that the decree was conditional. God, they say, having purposed to send his gospel to this and the other nation, foresaw in what manner each individual would conduct himself in reference to it. He foresaw, that while some, under the influence of pride of understanding and worldly affections, would treat it with neglect and contempt, others would embrace it with a sincere and upright heart, and live in obedience to its precepts ; and these, he appointed to salvation on the ground of their foreseen faith and good works. The decree of God, although prior to time, is posterior in order to the actions of men, and is dependent upon the determination of their will. But, to this opinion, so derogatory to the supreme dominion and absolute authority of God, the doctrine of Scripture is directly opposed. Election is ascribed to grace, to the exclusion of works ; and these two causes are represented as incompatible and mutually destructive. “ Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace ; otherwise work is no more work.” † How is it possible to reconcile with these words, the opinion that

* Acts xv. 18.

† Rom. xi. 5, 6.

the foresight of men's good works was the cause of their election? Besides, it is worthy of particular attention, that faith and holiness, which the advocates of conditional decrees make the causes of election, are expressly said in Scripture to be effects of it. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;"* not for your faith and holiness, but through them as the means, by which the Divine purpose is executed. A passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians must be cited again. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."† Here the order is exactly the reverse of that which is laid down in the system of our opponents. Men are not first holy, or foreseen as to be holy, and then chosen; but they are first chosen, and then holy, their holiness being not the cause, but the end of the decree. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul produces the case of Jacob and Esau as an illustration of the subject, and traces the predestination of individuals, to happiness or misery, to the sovereignty of God without any consideration of their works. "When Rebecca had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."‡ As the lot of the two sons of Isaac was settled prior to their personal conduct, so the Apostle signifies, that the appointment of particular persons to salvation depends solely upon the good pleasure of God. It is, indeed, impossible to conceive, that God could foresee faith and holiness in men previous to their election, because, human nature being totally depraved, they can have no existence but as effects of divine grace; and if there be any thing clear in the Scriptures, it is this, that the communication of grace is the consequence of the love of God before the foundation of the world. This eternal love is the source, from which proceed those heavenly influences that purify the hu-

* 2 Thess. ii. 13.

† Eph. i. 4.

‡ Rom. ix. 10—13.

man soul. But how, it may be asked, does it happen, that in the face of all this evidence, so many should maintain conditional election? The true answer is, that the sovereign exercise of mercy renders us absolute debtors to our Maker; it leaves not a vestige of merit, it humbles us in the dust. How contrary this procedure is to our natural inclinations, you need not be informed. Man, fallen and degraded as he is, would still be great; and nothing comes with more reluctance from his lips than the right answer to this question, Who maketh thee to differ from another? He wishes to find some ground for saying, I have made myself to differ, and fondly embraces any theory which makes him the arbiter of his destiny, and suspends his final doom upon his own determination.

In the fourth place, The purpose of God respecting his elect, is immutable. It cannot be reversed. Some, indeed, have maintained, that the decrees of God are subject to change, like the purposes of men; and that a person who is one of the elect to-day, may become one of the reprobate to-morrow. This notion is in unison with their ideas of the freedom of the will, which, possessing a power to act in opposition to the influence of motives, may disappoint the calculations which had been made of its decisions, and render ineffectual the means employed to regulate its choice. Hence there may be sudden transitions from faith to unbelief, from the love of God to the love of the world; in consequence of which the name of the unworthy persons shall be blotted out of the book of life. This is the doctrine of Arminius and his followers, in whose writings we meet with such expressions as these: "It is false to say that election is confirmed from everlasting;" "men may make their election void;" "they do sometimes, of elect, become reprobate, and of reprobate, elect;" and "as they change themselves from believers to unbelievers, so the Divine determination concerning them changes." As it is evident that this doctrine is calculated to impair the consolations of the people of God, and to fill them with perplexity and fear; so it is in direct opposition to his word, which declares, that "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."* But, besides

* Ps. xxxiii. 11.

this general assurance of the immutability of his counsel, it is affirmed in particular, that “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” * There is no reason to doubt that “the foundation of the Lord” here signifies his decree, which is the ground of his knowledge of those who are his; and when we consider, that the words are introduced in connexion with the mention of false teachers who had erred concerning the truth, and overthrown the faith of some, we are led to infer the stability of the Divine purpose respecting the elect, and their subsequent security against the danger of total and final apostasy. We find our Saviour saying to his Father concerning his disciples, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.—Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;” † but that he was not properly an exception, is manifest from the words immediately subjoined, “that the Scripture might be fulfilled,” which import that his perdition was foreknown and predetermined. In a word, the immutability of the decree is evident from the close connexion established between election and final salvation, by a process, all the steps of which are inseparably conjoined. “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” ‡ You perceive that a chain stretches from eternity to eternity, not one link of which can be broken. The purpose of God, according to election, shall stand. The rage of the world, the malice of devils, and the will of man, froward and perverse as it is, shall not be able to overthrow it. “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” ||

This, then, is the sum of what has been said on the subject of election; that God did make choice of certain individuals to enjoy salvation in preference to others; that he chose them before the foundation of the world; that in doing so, he acted according to his sovereign will, and was not influenced by the foresight of their good qualifications; and that this

* 2 Tim. ii. 19. † John xvii. 6, 12. ‡ Rom. viii. 30. || Is. xlv. 9, 10.

decree is immutable, it being impossible that any of the elect should perish.

There is one particular which remains to be considered, namely, what is the connexion between the decree of election and the mediation of Christ. Had God any respect to it, in choosing some men to salvation? If he was not influenced by the foresight of their faith, was he influenced by the view of their future relation to the Saviour? In other words, were they predestinated to life for his sake? And is this the meaning of the Scripture when it says, that they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world?—To this question I return an answer in the negative. Whatever is the sense of the phrase now quoted, this cannot be its meaning. We must explain one passage of Scripture in consistency with another; and, as we find that the mission of our Saviour was the effect of the love of God, or, to use his own words, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,”* we conclude that his mediation was not the cause, but the consequence of election. The end is first in intention, and then the means are appointed. The end in this decree was the salvation of the elect, and the means were the incarnation, and death, and intercession of our Lord. In the Divine mind, there is no succession of thoughts; but according to our analogical mode of conceiving its operations, the appointment of certain persons to salvation, was prior to the appointment of the means by which they should be saved. The phrase, chosen in Christ, signifies, I apprehend, that God had a respect to the mediation of his Son, not as the reason of their election, but as the expedient by which his purpose would be executed. When he chose them, he gave them to Christ, as he himself speaks. He constituted him their Head; he set him up from everlasting as their Representative and Surety, by whom all would be performed which his justice required as the condition of their final happiness. Hence, grace is said to have “been given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began,”† and eternal life is called the promise “which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”‡ In both passages there is an obvious reference to Christ, to whom

* John iii. 16.

† 2 Tim. i. 9.

‡ Tit. i. 2.

eternal life and all the blessings of grace were promised, as the federal head of the elect. But they were first chosen and then given to him, agreeably to his own declaration, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me."*

Election, being the purpose which God purposed in himself, an intrinsic act of the Divine mind, remains unknown till it be manifested in its execution. No man can read his own name, or that of another, in the Book of Life. It is a sealed book, which no mortal can open. We are assured that there is such a decree, by the express testimony of Scripture; but of the persons included in it, nothing is known or can be conjectured, till evidence be exhibited in their personal character and conduct. An Apostle points out the only means by which this important point can be ascertained, when he exhorts Christians to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure."† To make sure, signifies in this place to ascertain, to render a thing certain to the mind. Now, the order of procedure is, first to make our calling certain, or to ascertain that we have been converted to God, and thus our election will be sure, or manifest to ourselves. It is the same kind of reasoning which we employ, in tracing out the cause by the effect. The operation of divine grace in the regeneration of the soul, is a proof that the man in whom this change is wrought, was an object of the divine favour from eternity. The love of God is the source of all the blessings conferred upon believers. In particular, that operation of his power, by which they are brought into the fellowship of the Gospel, is declared to be the consequence of a prior purpose to save them. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." The evidences of regeneration, therefore, are evidences of election; but there is no other process by which the latter may be proved. The Scriptures give us no information on the subject: it cannot be known by special revelation, for God makes no disclosure of such secrets; nor is it to be inferred from impressions or feelings of the mind, for these are the effects of fancy, and no wise man will attend to them. Till the decree bring forth, no created being can tell what are its contents. For "who

* John xvii. 6.

† 2 Peter i. 10.

hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

As no man can know his election till he believe, it is plain that the decree ought to have no effect upon his conduct in reference to the Gospel. What is unknown can have no moral influence upon the mind, any more than what does not exist. The rule of our duty is the word of God. The only subject into which we should inquire, is the declaration of his will respecting us; and no inference, which we may draw from the doctrine under consideration, will justify us in neglecting our duty. God has not told us whom he has chosen to salvation; but he has told us, that all to whom the Gospel is preached should believe it, and that every man who does believe shall be saved. We have a law plain and express, and a promise encouraging obedience to it, which, having been made by Him who is incapable of deceiving us, will certainly be performed. This should satisfy us, and put an end to our disputes. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but things that are revealed to us and to our children for ever." *

The doctrine of election is attended with difficulties; but, if it is delivered in the Scriptures, as I trust has been proved, we are bound to receive it. All that we ought to expect with regard to subjects so profound, is sufficient evidence of their truth; it is impossible that, to our limited faculties, they should be made so clear as to supersede all objections. The proper office of faith is to assent to the doctrines of religion upon the Divine testimony alone; and its strength is never so fully displayed, as when it receives no aid from sense or reason, and, although both should ask with an air of scornful triumph, How can these things be? rests with unshaken confidence upon the word of Him who cannot lie. Let us never forget that it is not reason, but revelation, which is our guide in religion, and that, when the latter speaks, it is the province of the former to listen and acquiesce.

* Deut. xxix. 29.

LECTURE XXXVI.

ON PREDESTINATION.

DECREE OF REPROBATION.—PROOF THAT THERE IS SUCH A DECREE.—
THE GROUND OF IT; AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS.—PRACTICAL UTILITY
OF THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION.—OBJECTIONS TO IT.

HAVING considered, in the preceding Lecture, the decree of election, I now proceed to speak of that of reprobation. Our Church gives the following account of it:—"The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."* To reprobate is to disapprove, or to reject; and the term is used to express that act of God by which, when all mankind were before the eye of his omniscience, he rejected some, while he chose others. Some are disposed to prefer the word preterition, not only because it is a softer term, but because they conceive that there was no positive act of God in reference to those who were left in their sins, but that he merely passed them by. His procedure towards them, they consider as a simple negation of the favour which he extended to others. But, although there is no reason for employing terms unnecessarily strong, upon a subject which in itself is very awful, and we would not imitate those who have chosen to express themselves in the harshest and most offensive manner,

* West. Conf. chap. iii. § 7.

as if they had felt some strange delight in painting it with the darkest colours; yet I do not see how we can suppose nothing more than a sort of inactive preterition, as there was undoubtedly an act of the will of God with respect to the reprobate as well as the elect. When, out of many objects which are presented to him, a person makes a selection, he as positively rejects some as he chooses others. He does not pass by any without taking notice of them; but, having them all at once, or in succession, under his eye, he takes and leaves, for reasons which are satisfactory to himself. Not to choose, is a negative phrase, but it does not imply the absence of a determination of the mind. It is not to words, but to things, that we ought to attend; and any man, who reflects upon the operation of his own mind in a similar case, will perceive that the will is exercised in passing by one object, as much as in choosing another. There seems to be no reason, therefore, for denying, that what is called reprobation was a positive decree as well as election. Some distinguish reprobation into negative and positive; calling it negative, as it consists in withholding from the objects of it the favour which is extended to the elect, and positive, as it consists in a purpose to permit them to be hardened in sin, and to punish them for their final unbelief and impenitence.

Without dwelling upon these niceties, let us proceed to shew, that there is such a purpose of God as is commonly called reprobation. It appears from what has been already said, that it is necessarily implied in the idea of election, so that, having proved the one, we have virtually proved the other. Election and rejection are correlative terms, and men impose upon themselves, and imagine that they conceive what it is impossible to conceive, when they admit election and deny reprobation. When of several objects some are chosen, the rest are rejected. It is to no purpose to say that nothing has been done to them, but that they are left in the state in which they were found. In one sense this is true, and in another it is not true; because, as they might have been chosen but were not, there has been an act of the mind refusing to choose them. The person to whom they were presented has said, 'These I will take, and those I will not

take.' There are many passages of Scripture in which this doctrine is taught: we read of some whose names are "not written," and who consequently are opposed to those whose names are written, "in the book of life;" * who are "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," † who were "before of old ordained to condemnation," ‡ who "stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed;" § of persons whom God is said to hate, while others he loves. § Let any man carefully and dispassionately read the ninth and the eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and he will entertain no more doubt that some are ordained to death, than that others are ordained to life. He will see a distinction stated between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, and traced up to its source in the sovereignty of God, who will "have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion; so that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." ¶ He will find, that some have not obtained righteousness or salvation, but that others have obtained it; and that the former are called "the election," and the latter "the rest," ** *οι λοιποι*, the remainder, or those who were left. However awful and revolting to our feelings the doctrine may be, however liable to objections it may seem, and whatever startling inferences our perverse reason may deduce from it, it is impossible, with any appearance of fairness, to deny that it is delivered in the Scriptures.

If we inquire into the reason why God passed over some in his eternal decree, while he extended mercy to others, we must content ourselves with the words of our Lord, which were spoken in reference to the execution of his purpose:—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." †† It may be supposed, indeed, that we need not resolve the decree

* Rev. xiii. 8. † Rom. ix. 22.

‡ Jude, 4.

§ 1 Peter ii. 8.

§ Mal. i. 2, 3. ¶ Rom. ix. 15—18.

** Rom. xi. 7.

†† Matth. xi. 26.

of reprobation into the sovereignty of God, as a sufficient reason for it may be found in the moral character of its objects, who, being considered as fallen and guilty creatures, may be presumed to have been rejected on this account. But although this may seem at first sight to have been the cause of their reprobation, yet upon closer attention we shall see reason to change our opinion. It is obvious that, if they had not been considered as fallen, they would not have been rejected, unless we adopt the Supralapsarian hypothesis, which affirms that they were viewed only as creatures, and that, by that uncontrolled power which may make one vessel to dishonour, and another to honour, their appointment to perdition, for the glory of Divine justice, was prior to the purpose to permit them to fall. There is something in this system repugnant to our ideas of the character of God, whom it represents rather as a despot, than the Father of the universe. But, although their fall is pre-supposed to their reprobation, it will appear that the former was not the reason of the latter, if we recollect that those, who were chosen to salvation, were exactly in the same situation. Both classes appeared in the eyes of God to be guilty, polluted, and worthy of death. Their sinfulness, therefore, could not be the reason of rejection in the one case, since it did not cause rejection in the other. If it was the reason why some were passed by, it would have been a reason why all should be passed by. As, then, it did not hinder the election of some, it could not be the cause which hindered the election of others. You ought not to think that there is too much refinement and subtlety in this reasoning. If you pay due attention to the subject, you will perceive that, as the moral state of all was the same, it could not be the cause of the difference in their destination. If there was sin in the reprobate, there was sin also in the elect; and we must therefore resolve their opposite allotment into the will of God, who gives and withholds his favour according to his pleasure:—"He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." *

In this decree of God, the two following things are to be distinctly considered. The first is the purpose to withhold from

* Rom. ix. 18.

the objects of it that grace which he would extend to the elect. He would send his Son into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, but he did not intend him to be the Saviour of the reprobate ; for, to say that he did, would be to say that he intended what is not accomplished, and consequently that he is disappointed. He would make his gospel be preached to them, or at least to many of them ; but he would not accompany it with those supernatural influences which would illuminate their minds, and change their hearts, and enable them to yield the obedience of faith. He would lay restraints upon them by his providence, so that the wickedness of their hearts would not find an opportunity of exerting itself in all its activity and virulence ; but he would leave them, in all other cases, to follow their own inclinations. Is there unrighteousness with God in this procedure ? God forbid. How can there be unrighteousness in denying a favour to which there is no claim ? There is certainly no law by which he is bound to deliver his apostate creatures from guilt and its consequences. Having transgressed, they are amenable to his justice ; and if justice take its course, who has a right to find fault ? God found men in sin ; and in leaving them there, he did no wrong, and was chargeable with no cruelty, if sin is a voluntary evil, and deserves the pains and penalties which are denounced against it in his word.

The second thing to be considered is, the purpose to subject the objects of this decree to everlasting punishment. They are “ appointed unto wrath : ” * “ Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.” † Of this part of the decree, we must admit sin to be the proper cause. It is not the cause, as we have seen, of their preterition ; but it is the cause of their destination to perdition. As this is an act of God in the character of a judge fixing beforehand the punishment of the guilty, the sentence must be preceded by the consideration of their guilt. There can be no will in God to punish any but sinners ; nor could the intention to punish be just, without a respect to disobedience. God does not arbitrarily, or in the exercise of sovereignty, consign any of his creatures to damnation. In a case of this

* 1 Thess. v. 9. 1 Pet. ii. 8. Jude 4.

† Rev. xx. 15.

nature, sovereignty has no place : it is justice alone which decides ; and if there were no fault, justice would inflict no suffering. It is for their sins against the law, if they lived under it alone, or for their sins also against the gospel, that they are doomed to destruction.

I am disposed to doubt, notwithstanding the opinion of Divines to the contrary, whether this purpose is any part of the decree of reprobation, which properly consists in passing by its objects, or rejecting them. The dooming of them to perdition seems to belong to a different decree, especially as it is founded on a different cause. They were appointed to wrath for their sins ; but it was not for their sins, as we have shewn, but in the exercise of sovereignty, that they were rejected.

This is all that I have to say on this part of the subject. I have endeavoured briefly to explain my views of it, and to prove that they are agreeable to Scripture ; but we must close this inquiry with the words of the Apostle : “ How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” *

The doctrine of the Divine decrees relative to the final destination of men, is not a barren speculation. There are practical purposes to which it may be applied ; and in particular, it is calculated to inspire sentiments of reverence and gratitude towards God.

First, It exhibits him in the august character of the Supreme Lord of the universe, who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and whose arm none can stay, saying to him, What dost thou ? We do not ascribe to him an absolute power to consign his creatures to misery, without any consideration of their guilt, because we do not wish to exalt his authority at the expense of his goodness and justice, and because such a Being could never be the object of our confidence and love. At the same time, we acknowledge that he does exercise a sovereign power over his creatures, considered merely as his creatures, for he has made some angels, some men, and some

* Rom. xi. 33.

irrational animals. But it is to his uncontrolled sway over his creatures, as fallen, that the present subject directs our attention. They were all before his eye in a state of pollution, and under a sentence of death. He might do with them what he would; and he has done according to his pleasure. He has not left all under their doom, nor extended mercy to all; but has distinguished between objects, in which there was no ground of distinction, and said to some, Ye shall live, and to others, Ye shall die. His will is the law, and from his sentence there is no appeal. It is by a view of his supreme dominion that the Apostle silences the murmurs and complaints of impious men: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" *

Secondly, It affords an illustration of the exceeding riches of his grace. It may be thought, indeed, that it rather represents him as severe and terrible, in consigning so many of the human race to perdition; but, although it is acknowledged that it does so, as we shall afterwards see, let us remember that there are two aspects under which the subject may be viewed, and that one of them is of the most pleasing and consoling nature. In the destination of a portion of the human race to the enjoyment of everlasting felicity, God appears in the character of the God of love. It is love of the purest and most disinterested kind, as it flowed out spontaneously towards its objects, while there were, not only no qualities in them to attract it, but every thing was repulsive. It strikes us the more, because its date is so ancient; because it anticipated the existence of its objects, and provided for their relief as soon as their necessity was foreseen; thus proving that love is essential to the Deity, and that nothing is more agreeable to him than the exercise of benevolence. As the whole

* Rom. ix. 20—23.

series of events was open to his all-seeing eye, the riches of his grace appear still the more wonderful, because the communication of them to the objects of his favour could not take place without a sacrifice, (if I may be permitted the use of this expression on such an occasion), without a sacrifice on the part of God, which nothing but infinite love could have made. The incarnation, the humiliation, the sufferings, the death of the Son of God, were the consequences of his purpose to bestow eternal life upon the unworthy objects of his choice. And when we add, that election is but the first step in the dispensation of mercy to mankind, that it is the first link of a chain which runs into eternity, and has no end, may we not say, How great is the goodness which thou hast wrought for them that fear thee? "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." *

Lastly, It gives a solemn and impressive view of his justice and severity. We have seen that sin was not properly the cause of reprobation, because, upon this ground, the whole human race would have been rejected. But sin rendered it just in God to pass by such as he pleased, and to doom them to everlasting misery. While we speak of his sovereignty in choosing some, and leaving others, let us not forget to think of his justice, because, when it is admitted as a principle of his procedure in the final allotment of the ungodly, some of the objections which are advanced against predestination will fall to the ground. The rejection of so many of the human race is a proof that God is holy and just; that sin is contrary to his nature, and the object of his abhorrence; so that, notwithstanding his essential goodness, which disposes him to promote the happiness of his creatures, he will not suffer it to pass with impunity. His justice appears the more awful and inflexible, because it is manifested at the same time with his love. Behold the goodness and severity of God; his goodness to the chosen, his severity to the rejected. This is such an association as we find in the proclamation of his name, to which the mention of this terrible attribute, after the celebration of his mercy in language studiously varied, gives a so-

* Rom. viii. 30.

lemn close. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." O! how great is he who sits upon the eternal throne as the arbiter of life and death, and pronounces the dreadful sentence upon many (how many we cannot tell) to display his power, and proclaim to the universe, that, full as his heart is of benevolence to his sentient creatures, the honour of his own character and government is dearer to him than their happiness! "Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy."

If the doctrine of predestination has a practical tendency, the question, whether it should be publicly taught, admits of an easy solution. It seems impossible, indeed, to assign a good reason for attempting to suppress any truth which is contained in the Scriptures. If it were useless, and still more, if it were dangerous, God would not have revealed it. But, as the subject is so difficult, and lies so far beyond our range of thought, it is plain that it is not to be attempted by every sciolist, who, with a few common notions of Theology in his head, may deem himself competent to engage in the most profound discussions; and farther, that it calls for modesty and diffidence in the best informed, and for the utmost care, to avoid human speculations, and to adhere, as much as possible, to the language of Scripture. When we allow reason to be our guide in these abstruse matters, we are not sure of the way, and may seem to ourselves to be treading on the high road, when we are wandering in a devious path. It may also be safely laid down as a rule, that it should not be frequently introduced, because, although it has a relation to the faith and practice of Christians, there are other subjects of which the influence is more immediate and extensive, and which ought therefore to occupy a more prominent place in a course of instruction. I should not entertain a favourable opinion of the wisdom of a minister who often declaimed upon these high mysteries, while he might spend his time more profitably to himself and his hearers, in speaking of the simple doctrines of the gospel, by which men live, and in which is the life of

their souls; and I am disposed to suspect, that we should find him and his followers more distinguished by pretensions to superior knowledge and disputatious zeal, than by humble faith and spirituality of mind. Attention should likewise be paid to times and circumstances in teaching this doctrine. None but a thoughtless zealot would bring it forward to meet the view of an inquirer into the truth of our religion, and thus take the direct method to disgust him at the outset: a wise man would begin with the elements or first principles, and then go on to the higher branches of the science, giving milk to babes, and reserving strong meat for men. It would be imprudent and cruel to obtrude the subject upon a person who was depressed with a sense of sin, and the fear of never enjoying the favour of God: unless we wished to increase his perplexity, and to drive him to despair, we would have recourse to different topics, to the freeness of Divine grace, the infinite value of the Saviour's blood, and the unlimited offer of salvation. It would betray great unskilfulness in the work of righteousness, to intermix this subject with an exposition of the common doctrines of the gospel; when we are speaking of the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, to be sure uniformly to add, that he died only for the elect; when we are inviting sinners to come to him, not to let pass the opportunity of reminding them, that unless they are elected, they never will believe; when we call upon men to repent, to take care not to omit, that if they be among the reprobate, they will not repent, as they are given up to hardness of heart. This sort of preaching, I should consider as injudicious in the highest degree, and as calculated to defeat the design of the preacher, if his design were the salvation of souls. We have no example of it in the Scriptures, nor do I think it consistent with common sense. I conclude with quoting the words of our Confession of Faith: "The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and ad-

miration of God ; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the gospel.”*

I shall conclude by taking notice of some of the objections which are advanced against the doctrine of predestination.

First, It has been often said, that it represents God as a respecter of persons. In order to ascertain whether there is any force in this objection, it is necessary to inquire what respect of persons means. I suspect that this is a point which our objectors have not been at pains to settle, and that they ignorantly suppose the preference of one to another to be the same with respect of persons, while there are not two things in the world more distinct. “Of a truth,” said Peter to Cornelius, “I perceive that God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”† From these words you perceive, that respect of persons is the preferring of one man to another, although both were equally entitled to regard, on account of some accidental circumstance, as, for example, his belonging to a particular nation. It is to give him the advantage above another, not for the superiority of his worth or the justice of his claim, but for some consideration altogether foreign to the man and his cause. Thus a judge is chargeable with respect of persons, when he is induced to pronounce an improper sentence, either by pity for a poor man, or by adulation of the rich. To this very case the law of Moses refers : “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment ; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty ; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.”‡ It has been laid down by Divines as a maxim, that respect of persons has no place in acts of bounty, in relation to which a man may do as he pleases, but has place in acts of justice, with regard to which there is an obligation upon him who distributes, to render to every one his due. It is absurd, therefore, to call God a respecter of persons in predestination, because, in his eternal purpose, he acted not as a judge but as a sovereign, as one who owed nothing to his creatures, and was guided by his own views of fitness and expedience, without any external

* West. Conf. c. iii. § 8.

† Acts x. 34, 35.

‡ Lev. xix. 15.

consideration. As the whole human race was fallen and guilty, there was nothing in any of them which could influence him to prefer them to others; he was moved solely by his own wisdom, and cannot therefore be called a respecter of persons.

Secondly, It is objected, that the doctrine of predestination supposes men to be laid under the necessity of sinning, and consequently makes God the author of their sin. I acknowledge that this horrible inference seems to be naturally deduced from the Supralapsarian scheme, which represents the introduction of sin as the appointed mean of executing the purpose of the Almighty, respecting the final doom of his creatures. But it does not follow from our scheme, which presupposes sin as the groundwork of predestination, and makes the act of God towards the reprobate to be nothing more than his purpose to leave them in their sin, and to withhold his grace, which he was under no obligation to communicate. God does not will the sins of man, or effect them by any operation of his power; he merely arranges his plan with a view to them, and overrules them for his glory. I confess that the statement may be objected to as not complete; that there are still difficulties which press upon us; that perplexing questions may be proposed, and that the answers which have been returned to them by great Divines are not so satisfactory in every instance, as those imagine who do not think for themselves, and take too much upon trust. The subject is above our comprehension. There are two propositions, of the truth of which we are fully assured,—that God has pre-ordained all things which come to pass, and that he is not the author of sin. There can be no doubt about either of them, in the mind of the man who believes the Scriptures. He may not be able to reconcile them, but this ought not to weaken his conviction of their truth. Instead of suspecting the one or the other, it will be wise in him and in us to suspect our own reasonings from them. We are sure that they harmonize; but, if our reasonings terminate in making them appear contradictory, we have ground to call their accuracy in question. By our reasonings, I mean our application of human ideas to the Divine decrees, and the inferences which we deduce from them.

Thirdly, It is objected against the doctrine of predestination, that it supersedes the use of means. If a man has been elected, he shall be saved, although he should give himself no concern, and even should live in sin : if he has not been elected, all his efforts to obtain eternal life will prove unavailing. But, of all objections, this is the silliest, although it is brought forward with great confidence, and by many is deemed very formidable. It is not an objection at all against the Scriptural doctrine of predestination, but against a spurious kind, hatched in the brains of ignorance, or concocted by malignity to bring odium upon the truth. The predestination to which this objection would be applicable, is an absolute pre-appointment of an end, without any regard to the means. But such predestination cannot without impiety be attributed to God, because it would be disgraceful to one of his intelligent creatures. Whoever reasons against this kind of predestination, is at perfect liberty to bring all the arguments which he can muster up to bear upon it, till he has fairly driven it off the stage. He must allow us, however, to tell him, that he has given himself a great deal of unnecessary labour ; that he has been contending with a chimera, and has gained an empty triumph, as our doctrine remains untouched. The predestination which we maintain, is a purpose which embraces means and ends, fixes the means as surely as the ends, and so connects them, that without the former, the latter cannot take place. If God has elected some persons to eternal life, he has chosen them to it through faith and holiness as the means of salvation ; if he has appointed other persons to wrath, his sentence is founded on their impenitence and unbelief. This is the doctrine of Scripture ; and if you will still assert that it renders all means unnecessary, you may with equal reason maintain, that a man who has been assured that, by the use of a certain medicine, his life will be prolonged, may justly take occasion from this assurance to neglect the medicine, and, at the same time, expect to live. Paul was assured, by a vision, of the lives of all that were in the ship with him, but still he said to the centurion, “ Except the sailors abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” And why did he say so, but because God had determined that the company should be saved by

the skill and activity of the sailors? The man who says that the decrees of God supersede the use of means, does not know what he is saying. The means are an essential part of the decree, and are as necessary as the end. I mean, that it is not more necessary, that those who were chosen to life should be saved, than it is, that they should repent and believe. You would say, that the decree of God had failed, if any of the elect should perish; and I would say with equal truth, that it had failed, if any of them were saved in a state of carelessness and indolence. The uselessness of means, in consequence of the doctrine of absolute decrees, is a topic of vulgar declamation, which every man, who wishes to maintain the credit of his understanding, should leave to sciolists and fools.

Lastly, It is objected, that the doctrine of predestination is inconsistent with the invitation of the gospel; for how could God offer salvation to men, if he had excluded them from it by an immutable decree? and how could he earnestly entreat them to believe, although he had determined to withhold his effectual grace? There is a greater difficulty here than orthodox Divines sometimes seem willing to acknowledge, and the mode in which they meet it, is not always satisfactory. A distinction between the secret and revealed will of God must be admitted, and in many instances is perfectly intelligible; but it is not easy to reconcile them, when, in revelation, he declares, that he is not willing that any should perish, but by his secret counsel, has left many to perish. He who sees no difficulty here, has not, as he probably imagines, more understanding than other men, but less. 'It may be remarked, however, that this objection does not press upon the system of absolute decrees alone, but meets every man, who simply admits the Divine prescience of future events; for how, it may be asked, can God in sincerity invite, beseech, and ex-postulate with men, evidently with a design to effect a change of their sentiments, although he knows infallibly before-hand, that they will never change? I know what may be said in answer to the objection; but I confess my inability to give complete satisfaction to myself or to you. Let us suspect our own views of the subject, rather than suspect the sincerity of God. Of the latter we are certain; it is essential to his

moral character, and is the foundation of our faith in his testimony, and our dependence upon his promises. We can never be certain that we understand the subject of predestination, so well as we understand that God is sincere. The latter truth, therefore, let us hold fast, whatever may become of our speculations respecting the former. Here we may err, because the subject is mysterious; but on the other point, we cannot be deceived. The gospel is preached to every creature. All are commanded to believe, and encouraged by the promise of salvation. God would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." * If doubts respecting these comfortable declarations of Scripture should be suggested to us from any quarter, let us repel them as hostile to our own peace, and subversive of religion, and say with the Apostle, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." †

In this and the two preceding lectures, I have considered the Divine decrees, first generally, and then more particularly, as they relate to men, and their eternal state. The doctrine which I have endeavoured to establish is, that God, before the beginning of the world, pre-ordained whatever comes to pass; or that, in the works of creation, providence, and redemption, he acts according to a plan previously settled in his own mind. To this general view of the subject there can be no objections, but as soon as we proceed to the application of it to human affairs, difficulties present themselves, which we are unable to solve. Two things are certain, that there are Divine decrees, which will be infallibly executed, and that man is responsible for his actions; but how to reconcile them is a question which has perplexed thoughtful men in every age, and to which a satisfactory answer has not yet been discovered. In this case, our duty is, not to reject either of those points, but to call in the assistance of faith, when reason fails, and to believe, that by a mysterious link, God, as the poet expresses it,

"— binding nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will." ‡

It can serve no great purpose to muster up objections against the infallibility of the Divine decrees, or the respon-

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

† Rom. iii. 4.

‡ Pope.

sibility of man ; to listen to them when proposed by others ; to revolve them in our minds ; to perplex ourselves with attempts to answer them, and to allow ourselves to be disquieted and to doubt because our endeavours are not successful. Although we should prove to our satisfaction, as many have done to theirs, that the decrees of God are not absolute, or that man is not free, all that we have gained is, to confirm our minds in the belief of a falsehood ; for both doctrines must be true, as they are expressly declared in the Scriptures. To their authority let us bow ; and by their decision let us regulate our thoughts and our conduct. If we will still oppose our reasonings to their dictates, we must take our course ; but let us beware lest we dispute ourselves into infidelity or atheism, and seek a refuge from our doubts in the rejection of revelation, because it inculcates truths which to us appear contradictory, or in the cheerless conclusion, that we live in a fatherless world, where chance bears sway, that man is the phantom of an hour, the sport of accident and passion, and that, as he knows not whence he came, so he cannot tell whither he is going. In opposition to this comfortless and impious conclusion, let us hold fast the creed which is consonant to reason as well as to revelation, that the Supreme Being manages the affairs of the universe which he created ; that all creatures are dependent upon him, and all events are subject to his control ; that while good men obey him from choice, the wrath and wayward passions of the bad are subservient to his design ; that, while his almighty power bends them to his purpose, he is a moral Governor and Judge, whose righteousness will be displayed in punishing transgressors, even for those actions which were the means of executing his own decrees.

LECTURE XXXVII.

ON CREATION.

IDEA OF CREATION.—EVIDENCES THAT THE UNIVERSE WAS CREATED.—
ILLUSTRATION AND DEFENCE OF THE MOSAIC ACCOUNT.—GOD'S DESIGN
IN CREATING THE UNIVERSE.

God works all things according to the counsel of his will, or, in other words, his external operations are conformable to the plan which was arranged by his wisdom from eternity. We are therefore naturally led, after having considered his decrees, to speak of their execution in his works. Our attention shall be directed, in the first place, to Creation, in which the execution of his purposes commenced.

In entering upon this subject, it is necessary to ascertain what is the precise idea of creation, or in what sense the term is used, when it is employed to denote the agency of God in the production of the universe. In this inquiry, we can receive no assistance from the consideration of the terms *ברא* and *κτίζω*, by which it is expressed in the Scriptures. Compound words are significant in themselves, because they are made up of terms to which a meaning has been previously affixed; but simple words are arbitrary sounds, which convey no idea to the hearer till he has been informed of what notion they are appointed to be the signs. Now, we find that the words under consideration have several acceptations in the Scriptures; and in particular, that the former signifies to make something out of nothing, to make something out of materials already existing or to give them a new form and arrangement,

to revive and re-invigorate, and, lastly, to effect a change in the moral qualities of the soul, as when a new heart is said to be created within us. It is evident that the term is used in the first of these senses in the first chapter of Genesis, when God is said to have "created" the heavens and the earth. The subsequent verses of that chapter give an account of the order in which matter already existing was disposed, while, in our world the sea was separated from the land, and the earth was clothed with herbs, and filled with inhabitants; and in the higher regions, the luminaries had their stations and revolutions assigned to them. The manifest design is, to inform us by what steps God brought the mass of rude matter into that beautiful assemblage of parts which excites the admiration of every beholder. The first verse, therefore, must be understood to refer to the original production of matter by his almighty power. "In the beginning," or at the commencement of time, he made out of nothing the matter of which the heavens and the earth were composed, and upon which their present form was afterwards superinduced. This, I think, is the natural way of explaining the words; and, according to this view of them, the Bible opens with an ascription of the act of creation to God, in the highest, or rather, the only proper sense of the term.

There is another passage which will assist us in ascertaining the sense in which God is said to have created the world. "Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear," * *μη εκ φαινομενων, τα βλεπομενα γεγονεναι*. Now, remark, that the Apostle would have suggested a different idea, had he used the phrase, *εκ μη φαινομενων*; for he would have intimated, that visible things were made of things invisible, which might have been supposed to signify the dark original chaos of the Heathens. But the expression, *μη εκ φαινομενων*, imports something very different, a denial that the universe was formed out of pre-existing matter. In other words, the worlds, according to the Apostle, were made out of nothing. Even the chaos of the ancients was invisible only because no sun, as Ovid

* Heb. xi. 3.

says, gave light to the world, and the evening moon did not then repair her new horns ; * it would have been seen, if there had been a medium through which it might be perceived. "The things that appear" are matter, which light has rendered visible, or matter which may be seen ; and of this matter, Paul assures us the worlds were not framed.

Different arguments have been employed to prove that the universe had a beginning, and, consequently, that it was created by the power of God. To suppose the universe to be eternal, is to suppose it to be self-existent. But, besides that there is nothing in matter, which is inert, passive, divisible, and subject to perpetual change, to suggest the idea of its self-existence, it should be remembered, that whatever is self-existent, is necessarily existent. But as this necessity is the same every where, it follows, upon the supposition, that matter must have existed every where, or must have filled every portion of space, and have been infinitely extended. But this is absurd, and contrary to fact. There is another consequence which is equally false, that, if matter exists necessarily, it must exist either in a state of motion or in a state of rest, as necessity will determine every part of it to be in the same state. It would be impossible that, as is actually the case, one part of it should be in motion and another at rest. The necessity of its existence would extend to all its modifications ; and, indeed, if we closely consider the subject, we shall find that it could have no modifications, but that, under the influence of necessity acting uniformly every where, it must have presented every where one uniform mass. How contrary this is to the actual state in which matter appears, we all know by observation.

Another argument against the eternity of the universe, is founded in the nature of time, which is a succession of moments. We can conceive time to commence at any given period, and to run on *ad infinitum*, or never to come to an end ; but we cannot conceive it to be actually infinite. An infinite duration can never be made up of finite parts ; because as each of those parts has an end, the sum which they compose must also have an end. As it is impossible that an infinite suc-

* Ovid. *Metamorph.* lib. i. v. 10.

cession of moments can be past, it is impossible, that the universe can have existed from eternity. Further, if matter has existed from eternity, it must have existed, as we have seen, in the same form which it at present sustains, for this is the consequence of its necessary existence. The earth on which we dwell, and the heavens above us, are eternal; and the same motions have been incessantly going on in the immense regions of space. The earth has been revolving on its own axis, and, as well as the other planets, has been performing its circuit around the sun. Its revolutions upon its axis have been infinite; and so have been its revolutions in its orbit; and so have been the revolutions of Saturn. Mark the consequence. We have here three infinities, which are made up of unequal parts; an infinity made up of the revolutions of Saturn, the time of which is twenty-two times less than the infinity made up of the annual revolutions of the earth, and many thousand times less than the infinity made up of the diurnal revolutions of the latter. Thus we are landed in a palpable absurdity, from which we can only escape by renouncing the untenable hypothesis of the eternity of the universe, and admitting the Scriptural doctrine of its creation.

Another argument against the eternity of the world is founded on the recent date of authentic history. If, indeed, the accounts of some nations were to be credited, we should believe, that our earth has existed for many millions of years; but these are the dreams of poets, or of men of wild and undisciplined imaginations, and have been satisfactorily proved to be false. No credible history reaches farther back than the period which Moses has assigned for the creation; and profane history has nothing to relate but fables and rumours till the age of Herodotus, who flourished about five hundred years before the Christian era. The silence of history with respect to any event prior to the time when we suppose the world to have been created, is unaccountable, if it had existed for eternity, or even for millions of years. How does it happen that not a hint has come down to us of innumerable former generations? Surely, the human race must have possessed letters and science long before the date which we assign to them. How have all their monuments perished? How is it that

to us thousands and thousands of generations are as if they had never been? And how is it that civilization and learning can be traced back only to a period which is but as yesterday, if the earth and its inhabitants had no beginning? The want of all records of a higher date, the recent origin of nations, and the late invention of arts, all concur to shew, that only a few thousand years have elapsed, since our earth and its inhabitants came into existence. This argument was employed long ago by Lucretius, a follower of Epicurus, who, although an atheist, maintained, according to the doctrine of his master, that the present system had a beginning, in respect at least of arrangement and form. If the heavens and the earth are eternal, why have the actions of illustrious men so often sunk into oblivion? Why does no record remain to perpetuate their fame? Why does history begin with some facts of comparatively modern date?

Cur supra bellum Thebanum et funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere poetæ? *

Notwithstanding these arguments, none of the ancient philosophers, not even Lucretius or his master, had any proper idea of the creation of the universe. They all believed the eternity of matter. Ocellus Lucanus, in his treatise *Περὶ τοῦ παντός*, maintains the eternity of the universe by this argument, that what will have no end had no beginning; drawing a confident conclusion from a mere assumption, and taking for granted two things, which any person was at liberty to deny, and for which he could not produce the shadow of proof, that the universe will last for ever, and that it is impossible for a being to last for ever which had a beginning. It is impossible, he says, for any thing to be produced out of nothing, *ἐκ τῶν μὴ οὐτῶν*, or to be resolved into nothing.† He does not speak of a Being distinct from matter, by whom it was reduced to order. The doctrine of Plato was, that there were two principles of the universe, both self-existent and independent, matter and God; and that God wishing all things good, and as far as his power extends, nothing evil, having received matter in a discordant state, brought it from dis-

* Lucret. de Rerum Nat. Lib. v. 327.

† Chap. i.

order into order, judging this to be preferable. Even Socrates treated as fools and madmen those who attempted to solve the question, whether all things were generated and perished, or were eternal and indestructible. Epicurus admitted, that the heavens and the earth had a beginning in respect of their present form, and, as we may infer from his disciple Lucretius, seems to have considered their origin as not very remote ; but he maintained, in common with other philosophers, the eternity of the matter of which they were composed. According to his fanciful theory, it existed in the form of atoms, which moving in the immensity of space, met at last, and formed that stupendous and beautiful system, which no man can contemplate without admiration and delight. In order to accomplish this design, Epicurus was under the necessity of making many gratuitous assumptions. He supposed that his atoms were in motion, although no reason could be assigned why they were once in motion, and are now at rest ; that their motion up or down, was not perpendicular but somewhat inclined, so that there might be a possibility of their meeting ; and that, small as they were, they were not of a uniform shape, but that while some were smooth, others were hooked, and so could lay hold of their neighbours, and coalesce into a palpable body. Furnished with these postulates, he was ready to show how the universe was framed by mechanical causes, without the intervention of an almighty and intelligent Agent. His theory has been repelled by heathen and Christian writers ; but the ravings of wild speculation never deserved a serious answer. You will observe, that as Archimedes could not move the earth, as he promised, because he could not find a place on which to rest his lever, so without atoms Epicurus could have done nothing. Like the other philosophers, he conceived it impossible that the heavens and the earth should have been made, without pre-existing materials.

It is, then, with propriety and justice, that an Apostle declares, that "through faith" we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. It is revelation which has informed us, that all things had a beginning, and reason

assents to the doctrine as true, and derives from its own reflexion new arguments to support it.

The act of creation, which we ascribe to God, is the production of something out of nothing. The power by which creation was effected, we may not be able to conceive, because it is different from the power which we exert, or which we have seen exerted by others. All that we can do is to operate upon materials already existing; and even here, the sphere of our activity is very limited. But there is no reason why we should deny or doubt, that there is such power in God; for it is one of the first dictates of reason, that we ought not to measure him by our standard. As there is nothing to limit the perfections of the First Cause, we believe his power to be infinite, by which we mean, power which can perform every thing that does not imply a contradiction, or which can perform every thing possible. It is plain, I think, that the production of something out of nothing implies no contradiction; and to say, therefore, that God could not create, in the sense already explained, would be to say, that his power was not the greatest conceivable, that he was finite in one of his attributes, and consequently finite in them all.

In speaking of the creation of the universe, the sacred historian adopts the common and obvious division of it into two parts, the earth and the heavens. The earth, indeed, is but a very small part of the universe, like a drop to the ocean; but, as it is the allotted habitation of the human race, it was worthy of distinct mention, and a particular description. At first, it seems to have existed in a fluid form, without order and beauty, or to have been covered with water. "The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."* As the word rendered Spirit, signifies also wind, some have supposed, that in this place it may be so translated; and that Moses meant to inform us that a mighty wind, called in the Hebrew idiom, a wind of God, agitated the unwieldy mass. But this view of the passage is destitute of any foundation. Wind is air in motion; but at this period, it would seem the atmosphere did not exist. It appears to have

* Gen. i. 2.

been the work of the second day, when God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters."* The word עֲרָבָה, which is translated by the Seventy *στερεωματα*, and in the Vulgate *firmamentum*, from which our "firmament" is derived, signifies an expanse; a term which very aptly denotes the atmosphere, capable as it is of being so much expanded by heat, and extending to a great distance from the surface of the earth. Besides, the office assigned to the firmament, of dividing the waters from the waters, belongs to no part of nature which we know, but the atmosphere, in which the water exhaled from the earth and the sea is suspended, till, condensed by cold, it falls down in dew and rain. Whatever, then, may have been the operation to which Moses refers, it was the Spirit of God who moved upon the face of the waters.

It is unnecessary to enter upon a particular detail of the successive steps by which the earth was brought into its present form. On the first day, light was created; on the second, the atmosphere was formed; on the third, the water was collected in the seas and lakes, and the dry land appeared, which was immediately clothed with grass, and herbs, and trees; on the fourth, the sun, and moon, and stars were made, or became visible; on the fifth, the waters and the air were replenished with inhabitants; on the sixth, terrestrial animals were produced, and man, last of all, appeared to have dominion over this lower world.

I shall take notice of only one particular in this narrative, which, to those who are acquainted with the actual system of the universe, may seem to render it incredible. The sun is the great fountain of light to the inhabitants of the earth; but, according to Moses, light existed prior to the sun. The objection supposes us to know what we certainly do not know, that light is necessarily dependent upon the sun. But, although it now comes to us principally from him, yet he is not the only source from which it flows. There is light produced by the ignition of combustible substances, light struck out from hard bodies by percussion or friction, phosphoric light, and electric light, of which we sometimes see a brilliant dis-

* Gen. i. 6.

play in the Aurora Borealis. As there is light, even at present, without the sun, what difficulty or improbability is there in conceiving light to have been without him at the beginning? We cannot tell whether it now proceeds from his body or from his atmosphere; and on this subject, philosophers are divided in opinion. We know not, indeed, what light is, although we are acquainted with its laws and properties; but whatever is its nature and its connexion with the sun, I would understand the making of that luminary on the fourth day, not to be the creation of the matter of which it consists, but the collection of light in him as its grand repository. My reason for doing so is, that God is said at first to have created the heaven as well as the earth, and that the six days were employed merely in arranging them in their present form. This view will obviate another objection which may occur to a philosophical mind,—that the earth could not have occupied its proper place in the system, if it had been made before the sun, by which it is retained in its orbit. But, if the law of gravitation had then been established, and the planetary movements had begun, the matter can be satisfactorily explained, by supposing that the sun was created at the same time with the earth, but that it was not till the fourth day that he became a luminous body. The influence which he exerts upon the motion of the earth, depends not upon his light, but upon his solid mass.

All the other parts of creation are comprehended under the name of the heavens, which, in the plural number, signifies in the language of the Jews, the region where clouds and meteors are formed, or the air; the region of the sun, moon, and stars; and lastly, the heaven of heavens, the habitation of the blest. We have spoken of the first, which properly belongs to the earth, in our remarks upon the firmament or expanse. The sun, we have already seen, is the great source of light to our system; and the moon, although probably created as soon as the earth, is said to have been made on the fourth day, because then only it became visible by reflecting the rays of the sun. Under the denomination of the stars are included not only those luminaries, which are properly called so, but the planets also which belong to our system. Our

Bibles give us no farther account of them, than that they were appointed for signs and for seasons ; and any additional information respecting them, is founded on observation and reasoning. The discoveries of modern science make no part of Theology ; but they are worthy of attention, because they exalt our ideas of the might and beneficence of our Creator. As the planets are removed from us by many millions of miles, they could not be visible unless their magnitude was great. How much greater is the magnitude of the fixed stars, the distance of which from the earth is such, that it seems but a step to the utmost planet which revolves around the sun ! It is natural to ask, for what purpose they were placed in the heavens ? It was not surely to give light to the earth ; for all their light is of little account, and more would be furnished by a single additional satellite of a size far less than the moon. It is not to mark the revolution of the year, and the progress of the seasons ; for this is ascertained by the motion of the sun, and the changes which take place upon the surface of the earth. Shall we then suppose that they were created in vain ? Shall we suppose that a Being of infinite wisdom, who made the little ball which we inhabit for great purposes, and made that star which we call the sun, to give it light, has lavished his power in the production of thousands and millions of suns for no assignable end ? Why are such vast bodies so situated as to appear to us only as points ? Was their surpassing splendour, which attracts, indeed, the eye of a spectator upon earth, but darts upon it only a faint and ineffectual ray, bestowed to be wasted on the barren fields of ether ? We cannot for a moment admit a conclusion which seems to charge the Lord of nature with folly, and is at variance with the proofs of intelligence and design which are so amply supplied by his other works. The opinion, that around those suns planets revolve, the inhabitants of which rejoice in their light, and are cheered by their influences, is something more than a flight of fancy. It rests upon strong grounds of belief ; and while it vindicates the wisdom of God in replenishing with so many bodies the wide regions of space which would be otherwise useless, it fills us with admiration of his inexhaustible goodness, which has diffused life and happiness far beyond the

reach of the eye, and the more extended range of imagination. It may be mentioned as a corroboration of this theory, that in the heavenly bodies which lie nearer us, we observe certain phenomena, which indicate that they are destined for some other purpose than to give light to the earth. The surface of the moon, like that of our globe, is diversified by hills and vallies, which we cannot conceive to be of any use, if the moon is a solitude. In three of the planets, we observe a provision similar to what is made for us, to alleviate the darkness of the night, in the satellites which move around them, in different times, and at different distances. Why are they accompanied with moons, if there are no inhabitants to whom their light would be grateful in the absence of the sun? To us they can be of no use, because they are invisible to the unassisted eye. There is another wonderful fact, from which, however, we cannot reason so certainly, the ring of Saturn, because we are unacquainted with its use; but we may be confident that it was not placed there in vain. If it was intended for ornament, there must be some spectators nearer than the inhabitants of this globe, to whom it was unknown till modern times, and of whom scarcely one in a hundred thousand has ever seen it, and then very imperfectly through a telescope; if it was intended for accommodation, it was the accommodation not of the planet itself, which no more needed this appendage than Jupiter or Mars, but of the beings who reside upon its surface. Upon the whole, it is highly probable, that as the fixed stars are luminous bodies of an immense size, or in other words, suns, they are surrounded, like our sun, with planets, which are not deserts, but the seats of life, and activity, and enjoyment. Thus, the universe opens upon us in all its magnificence and extent; and lifting up our thoughts to Him, at whose fiat it arose out of nothing, we feel ourselves constrained to express our admiration and praise in the words of the Psalmist, "How manifold, O Lord, are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

The heavens signify, in the last place, the region of peace, and purity, and joy, where God manifests himself in all his glory to his perfect creatures. It must be a place, because

human bodies at present dwell in it, and it is the destined abode of the just after the resurrection; and it must, therefore, have been created. We can say little more about it; but we may bestow a few words in passing, upon its original inhabitants, the angels, although no mention is made of them in the Mosaic account of the creation. We know that they are creatures, who, as an apostle informs us, were called into existence by our Saviour, who created things visible and invisible, probably at that time when the heavens were made, with all their host. We are told, that when God laid the foundation of the earth, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy."* They are pure spirits, although they have occasionally assumed a visible form. They were created in a state of holiness and felicity, from which some of them fell through pride, and have been cast down into darkness, where they are "reserved in chains unto the judgment of the great day."† They excel in wisdom and strength, are possessed of knowledge far superior to that of man, and of power which his mightiest efforts could not resist. They are employed by God in the affairs of his government. They execute judgments upon the wicked, and minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. Although we do not see them, yet they are well known to us by means of the Scriptures, which make frequent mention of them, and give a detail of their offices and operations. But I shall not enlarge upon this subject at present: it is sufficient to have referred to angels as a part, and a distinguished part of the creation.

Our next inquiry relates to the time when the world was created. According to the Hebrew chronology, as ascertained by Archbishop Usher, the creation took place four thousand and four years before the birth of Christ; but according to the Septuagint, nearly six thousand years. There can be little doubt which of these computations should be preferred. The original, when all the copies agree, is surely higher authority than a translation. With me, the authority of the version would go but a short way; and I cannot conceive for what reason some learned men are disposed to pay such deference to it in this and in other matters, as it is full

* Job xxxviii. 7.

† Jude 6.

of mistakes and blunders, and is probably the most inaccurate of all translations. But, here we are encountered by the pretended discoveries of modern science; and the observations which have been made upon the structure of the earth, are supposed to contradict the Mosaic account, by proving that it must have been created at a more distant period, if it was created at all; and that it must have undergone many revolutions prior to what we call the beginning. Some reject the account of Moses entirely; and others conceive that it tells us, not of the original creation of the earth, but of the changes which took place upon it after some terrible convulsion. Thus, according to the words of a celebrated poet,—

“ Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn
That He who made it, and revealed its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.” *

This is manifestly a subject beyond the reach of our faculties; and geology, as sometimes conducted, is a monument of human presumption, which would be truly ridiculous were it not offensive by its impiety. “Where wast thou,” said the Almighty to Job, “when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.” † Our philosophers do not pretend to have been present when the earth was founded; but they profess to shew us how it was made, and that a much longer period was necessary to form its rocks and its strata, than the Scriptures assign. Thus puny mortals with a spark of intellect, and a moment for observation, during which they take a hasty glance of a few superficial appearances, deem themselves authorised to give the lie to Him who made and fashioned them, and every thing which they see. It happens, however, that forsaking the only safe guide in such high speculations, and following the faint and deceitful light of reason, they wander in the mazes of error and uncertainty. Their theories are different; what one builds up, another destroys; and amidst the conflict of opinions, all equally false, the narrative of Moses stands unmoved, like the rock amidst the

* Cowper's Task, B. III.

† Job xxxviii. 4.

waves, resting on the solid basis of all the proofs by which the genuineness and inspiration of his writings are demonstrated. "From the endless discordance in the opinions of philosophers on this point," says a learned Professor; "from the manifest inadequacy of the data we are at present in possession of; and from the physical impossibilities which must for ever be a bar to any thing more than a superficial knowledge of the earth's structure,—it is preposterous to suppose, that that high degree of moral evidence on which the credibility of Scripture rests, can with any justice be weakened by our interpretation of phenomena, the connexion of which among themselves even, we certainly are at present, and probably ever shall be, incapable of explaining."

The vanity of the reasoning of modern geologists, may be made manifest, and the basis of their theories overturned, in a very easy way. They talk of primitive formations, and ascribe the origin of rocks to precipitation and crystallization. Looking at a piece of granite from the mountains, they point out the characters of aqueous or igneous fusion, and say that it was formed by the agency of water or fire, carried on through a long process, which it required ages to complete. It is not denied that the substance might have been produced by the laws of chemistry, but is it certain that it was so produced? Those laws are at present operating throughout our world; but, if it was not eternal, they must have had a commencement. Why may we not suppose that their Author anticipated their operation, and immediately created substances of such a texture or composition, as would have resulted from them in the natural order? Why may we not suppose, that he made rocks at first such as they would have been made by precipitation and crystallization? No geologist can deny that the thing was possible, unless he be an Atheist, and then we have nothing to do with him or his theory; and if it was possible, his argument from primitive formations against the comparatively modern date of the earth, vanishes into smoke. We say that, although certain substances might have been produced by secondary causes, God could and did produce them at once. That there was a first man, will be denied by none but an Atheist. Now, if

we were in possession of one of his bones, we should find that in all respects it resembled the bones of his posterity; and reasoning according to our geologists, we should conclude that at first its fibres were soft, that they gradually became cartilage, and last of all acquired the hardness of their perfect state. But we should reason falsely, because that bone was made solid and firm in a moment. If we saw one of the first trees, we should perceive no difference between it and a tree of more recent date. On being cut across, it would exhibit the same folds or circles, indicating the growth of successive years, and increasing in hardness as they were nearer to the centre. The theory of the geologist would justify us in maintaining that it had originally sprung from a seed, and required many years to bring it to maturity; while the fact would be, that it was the work of an instant. In both cases, we have all the apparent effects of the processes of ossification and lignification, while it is certain that the processes never took place. We have therefore demonstration of the authority of a rule which has been laid down, and effectually destroys all the geological systems which represent second causes as immediately concerned in the formation of our earth. It is this, that sensible phenomena cannot alone determine the mode of formation. We have no occasion to convert each of Moses' days into thousands of years, and to conceive the chaos as an immense laboratory, from which, after the operations of ages, the earth came forth as we now see it. There was a power adequate to create it at once, which formed the primeval rocks without the aid of fire or water, as it made perfect bones, and perfect trees, independently of the second causes, by which they are at present produced.

God created the heavens and the earth about four thousand years before the Christian era. The materials were produced out of nothing in an instant; but it is related, that six days were employed in arranging them in their present form. Some are of opinion that these were not natural days, but periods of an indefinite length; because they think that the world must have been created at an earlier date than Moses has assigned to it, and ages were necessary to give rise to those appearances which are observed in its structure. But, besides

that this opinion is objectionable on the ground, that it puts a meaning upon the word day, although it is distinctly defined by the evening and the morning, which it bears no where else in simple narrative, it remains to be proved that there is any necessity for such interpretation. Although the Mosaic account gives no philosophical explanation of material phenomena, yet it informs us that the earth was at first in a state of fluidity, and that it was covered with water again more or less, for a year at the deluge, when it underwent a terrible convulsion, perhaps by the operation of internal fire, of the existence of which we have proofs in so many volcanoes. The crust of the earth seems to have been then entirely shattered, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up. It is impossible for us to conceive the changes which must have been produced in its structure by this awful catastrophe, and the irresistible action of such an immense body of water as submerged the whole globe. If we cannot answer particularly all the objections of geologists, neither can they satisfactorily shew that the appearances, upon which they found their theories, were not caused by that event, and by the state in which the earth existed before it was brought into its present form. We may, therefore, understand the words of Moses literally, when he says, that in six days God created the heavens and the earth. As he could have perfected them at once, we cannot conceive any reason why he proceeded by degrees, but that he might exhibit his power and his wisdom more distinctly to us, who should be afterwards informed of the process; and that he might confirm, by his own example, the command to work on six days, and rest on the seventh.

There is a question which is more curious than useful, and which, like some other questions which have been proposed, does not admit of a satisfactory answer—respecting the season of the year when the world was created. On this point, men, as we might have expected, have been divided in opinion; but many have imagined that it was created in autumn, because then the civil year of the Jews commenced, as well as their Sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee; and chiefly because autumn is the season when the fruits are ripe, and consequently provision was ready for the use of man, and

other animals. I do not think that there is any force in either of these reasons; and with regard to the latter, it is obvious, that it leaves the matter as unsettled as before, because autumn is a local term, which varies in its application to different countries, according to their geographical situation. Even upon our side of the Equator, harvest is beginning in some countries when the seed-time is scarcely over in others; and hence, unless we know the place of paradise, to say that the world was created in autumn, gives no information at all with respect to the time when it was made.

Whether God ceased to create when he had made the heavens and the earth, is another question which we are not competent to answer. We cannot, without presumption, affirm or deny that he has since exerted his creating energy in other portions of space. It is certain that, although he is said to have "rested" on the seventh day, he was not fatigued, nor were his resources exhausted: "The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." Nothing more is implied in that expression, than that he produced no new species of creatures, and effected no new arrangement in the visible universe, or at least, on our earth. In strict language, the act of creation was confined to the first day, when the matter, of which the heavens and the earth are composed, was produced. The work of the following days consisted in separating it into its component parts, assigning to each of them its place and office, and combining them into a harmonious whole. The subsequent production of vegetables and animals is not properly a creation, but a new arrangement of matter already existing; which, however, required the same Almighty power that at first brought matter out of nothing. It must be granted, at the same time, that God continues to exert his creating power in producing the living principle in animals, and, in particular, the soul of men; which, being a spiritual substance distinct from the body, derives its existence immediately from the will of the Almighty.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host. The magnificent fabric was erected to be a monument of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of its Maker. His glory shines in every part of it; but it would have shined in

vain, if there had been no creature to contemplate it with an eye of intelligence, and celebrate the praises of the Divine Architect. Man, therefore, was introduced into the habitation which had been prepared for him,—a being of a higher order than those which were already made, endowed with an understanding to know his Creator, and with moral powers to be employed in his service.

If it is inquired, what was God's design in the creation of the universe? we must answer, that in this, as well as in all his other works, his ultimate end was his glory. God hath made all things for himself. Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. In the things which he has made, his power, and wisdom, and goodness, are displayed. When we say that he made all things for himself, as it is evident that we do not mean that they were necessary to him, or that he derives any benefit from them, so it is not to be understood that his purpose was to make a naked manifestation of his excellences, to be looked at, and admired by his creatures. We cannot, consistently with the greatness and dignity of his character, conceive this to be an object worthy of him, and sufficient to have induced him to exert his Almighty energy in the production of external things. We should thus separate his interests from those of his creatures, and convert the act of creation into an exhibition, and men into mere spectators of its magnificent scenery. The Maker of the universe is the Parent of its living inhabitants, and particularly of those who were endowed with intelligence; and in giving them existence, was influenced by the principle of benevolence. While other perfections are revealed in the fabric of creation, we must refer its origin to the goodness of the Deity, who, enjoying infinite happiness in himself, was willing to diffuse happiness around him. It may be objected that, if this was his design, it has been frustrated by the introduction of sin, with its consequence, misery. But, besides that still even in our world there is a copious, I had almost said, a profuse distribution of the riches of his liberality, the remedial scheme of redemption, which is intended to restore the happiness forfeited by sin, seems to confirm our idea of the diffusion of happiness being the design of creation;

and it should farther be considered that, as the universe fills the unknown regions of space, and, we have reason to believe, is peopled with innumerable sentient beings, what has happened in our diminutive planet, and among the celestial spirits, may be a deduction from the general good not greater than that of a unit from millions. By what motive can we conceive Him, who is independent and self-sufficient, to have been influenced to scatter through the mighty void suns and worlds, teeming with life, but that he might contemplate the spectacle, which must be pleasing to his benevolent nature, of countless myriads rejoicing in his bounty, blessed by the emanations of his love, and rendering to him the willing tribute of gratitude and praise ?

LECTURE XXXVIII.

ON ANGELS.

EXISTENCE OF ANGELS.—DATE OF THEIR CREATION.—THEIR NATURE.—
DIVIDED INTO TWO CLASSES.—CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD ANGELS.—
THEIR OFFICES IN THE AFFAIRS OF PROVIDENCE ; AND, IN PARTICULAR,
THEIR MINISTRY TO THE SAINTS.—ARE THERE GUARDIAN ANGELS ?

IN my last Lecture, in speaking of the heavens, I slightly adverted to the Angels as the inhabitants of that glorious region of the universe, in which God manifests himself in the full splendour of his perfections. The history of this higher order of creatures is of too much importance to be dismissed with an occasional notice, and is peculiarly interesting to us, as our affairs are intimately connected with the agency of Angels, whether they have retained their integrity, or have apostatized from God, and become corrupt and malignant.

I begin with the common observation, that the word Angel is a name, not of nature, but of office. It signifies literally a messenger, or a person sent. This is the primary meaning of *αγγελος* in Greek, and *מלאך* in Hebrew, whether it is used in reference to human beings, or to invisible agents. It seems, on one occasion at least, to denote persons invested with authority over others, and the Angels of the seven churches are probably their bishops or presidents.

That there are such beings as those whom we call Angels, in the common acceptation of the term, it might seem impossible for any person to deny who had read the Scriptures, and considered them as worthy of credit. Yet Luke informs us, that the Sadducees said that there was no resurrection, neither

Angel nor Spirit.* It has caused no small surprise, that while they acknowledged the inspiration of the sacred books of the Jews, they should have ventured to controvert a fact so explicitly asserted in them; and curiosity has been excited to discover by what reasoning, or what pretexts, they justified their unbelief. It has been supposed that they explained all the passages in which Angels are mentioned, in a figurative sense; or that they understood them to be temporary appearances, caused by the power of God, which vanished as soon as the purpose intended by them was accomplished. It is probable that Justin Martyr refers to the Sadducees, when he says, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, that some said that God, when he pleases, makes his power come forth, and again draws it back to himself, and that in this manner he made Angels. According to this opinion, they were not real and permanent substances, but spectres which, after a short time, dissolved into air, or disappeared like the colours of the rainbow. There have been moderns who coincided with the Sadducees in denying the existence of Angels, and affirmed that good Angels signify good thoughts, and bad Angels sinful thoughts. The opinion of at least some Unitarians respecting the former is, that they are manifestations of Divine power; the idea of such beings as devils is generally, if not universally, exploded by them; and in the usual manner, the language of Scripture is wrested to favour this hypothesis. It is not, surely, necessary that we should enter upon a formal refutation of the doctrine of either the ancient or the modern Sadducees. There would be no end of disputation, if every thing which might be said without the slightest appearance of reason, were deemed worthy of a serious answer. We feel no disposition to contend with a fool, who denies that the sun is shining at mid-day. If we can believe our own eyes when we peruse the sacred pages, and trust that we understand the meaning of words, we can entertain no more doubt of the existence of Angels than of that of man; and if some choose to spend their time in elaborate attempts to prove, that what is, is not, we may leave them to amuse themselves as they please.

To the question, When were Angels created? we can re-

* Acts xxiii. 8.

turn only a general answer. Moses has not made mention of them, unless, with some, we suppose them to be included in the hosts of heaven; but these seem rather to signify the celestial luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars. Different reasons have been assigned for this omission, of which I know not whether any is satisfactory, as, indeed, is not to be expected, when men attempt to point out the motives of a writer who lived more than three thousand years ago, and particularly of a writer who was guided in the composition of his works by the Spirit of inspiration. We have no reason, however, to think that the creation of Angels preceded the time to which Moses refers in the first chapter of Genesis. A prior date was assigned by many of the ancients, and some moderns have concurred with them; but it is a mere conjecture, and seems to be at variance with the general language of Scripture, which represents the creation of the visible universe as preceded by eternity, when the Almighty existed alone. To affirm that Angels were created before the earth, and the heavens stretched over it, destroys the argument for the eternity of our Saviour, which the Apostle draws from these words of the Psalmist as addressed to him, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands;" * and that priority to the visible creation is equivalent to eternity, is evident from the ninetieth Psalm, which is intitled, A Prayer of Moses, the man of God:—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." † The sacred historian does certainly teach, that the heavens were created at the same time with the earth; and although he takes no notice of the inhabitants of the heaven of heavens, there is ground to believe that that was the date of their existence. On what day they were created, is a question of mere curiosity. The following words have been understood to signify that they were created on the first day. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding;—when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." ‡ It appears that they

* Heb. i. 10, and Ps. cii. 25.

† Ps. xc. 2.

‡ Job xxxviii. 4, 7.

were present when this mighty fabric was reared, and celebrated the praises of the Divine Architect; and farther it is to no purpose to inquire.

Angels are spiritual beings. As such they are represented in a passage of the Psalms, which is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." * A modern critic has translated it thus: "Who maketh the winds his messengers, and flaming fire his ministers," in contradiction to the known usage of the Greek language, which, by prefixing the article to the noun *αγγελους*, clearly marks them out as the subject of discourse, and *πνευματα* as the property or quality affirmed of them. Angels are spirits; and no better definition, although it is of the negative kind, can be given of a spirit than that of our Saviour, who said to his terrified disciples, "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." † It is vain for us to inquire into the essence of a spirit. It eludes our search; but not more than does the essence of body, of which we know only the properties. Nothing is more foolish, and I may say unintelligible, than the definition of some philosophers, that the essence of spirit consists in thought. They might with equal propriety say, that the essence of matter is colour, taste, or extension. But, as every person, whom false philosophy has not deprived of common sense, perceives that colour supposes something coloured, and extension something extended, so, it is equally evident that thought implies a thinking substance. A materialist, who supposes thought to be the effect of the organization and motions of matter, may allege that he is unable to conceive the existence of a pure spirit; but, for the same reason, he must believe the Divine essence to be material; and it is but a step from thence to atheism, or the belief that the Deity is merely the unknown cause of attraction and gravitation, and the other laws and affections of body. To us who are convinced, by reason and revelation, that there is an immaterial principle in man, there is no difficulty in admitting an order of incorporeal beings, who inhabit the higher regions of the universe. It is no objection to the spirituality of their es-

* Heb. i. 7, and Ps. civ. 4.

† Luke xxiv. 39.

sence, that they are, and must be understood to be, in a particular place. Locality is the necessary attribute of a creature: it has an *ubi*, as the Schoolmen speak; if it is here, it is not there. We, indeed, are accustomed to think of place only in relation to body, because we are corporeal beings, and perceive objects and relations by means of our senses. But reason tells us that spirits also must have a place, although it can give us no assistance in conceiving how they are in it. At the same time, there is a fact familiar to us which confirms this dictate of reason, and we find it in ourselves; for if we have souls as well as bodies, they are confined to a place, as our experience assures us. Our thoughts may wander to the most distant regions, and pass in a moment from heaven to earth, but we ourselves remain in a particular spot. Nor is it any objection to the spirituality of Angels, that they have often appeared, and performed such actions as we perform by means of our bodies. We read also of appearances of God, but do not infer from them that he has corporeal members. In all such cases, a body was formed by the power of God, that his ministers might be seen, and might hold intercourse with men; and when it had served its purpose, it was no doubt laid aside.

Angels are immortal spirits; as we may infer from those words of our Lord, in which he announces the future condition of the righteous: "Neither can they die any more: for they are like," or rather, equal to, "the Angels,"* *ισαγγελοι*. It may be supposed, that their immortality is the natural consequence of their immateriality. Not consisting of parts, they are not liable to be dissolved. But the proper ground is the will of God, upon which the continuance either of matter or of spirit depends; and this will be more evident, if we reflect, that the laws of nature are nothing but the permanent agency of the Creator in a determinate manner; that it is his power which sustains the universe, and prevents it from returning to nothing; and that conservation, as we formerly showed, is not improperly called a continual creation. The human body does not die by crumbling into pieces, but by causes which put a stop to the motions upon which life

* Luke xx. 36.

depends. Sometimes, indeed, it is previously wasted by disease, and its vital parts are consumed ; but often it falls in full vigour, and without any preparatory process. There is an inaccuracy and a false statement in representing death as owing to the divisibility of matter, as is always done when the indivisibility of spirit is assigned as the cause of its immortality. The dissolution of the body is not the cause, but the consequence of death. Had Adam been obedient to the voice of his Maker, his body would have been immortal as well as his soul ; and although the future bodies of the saints, however highly refined, will still be material, yet, we have heard, that they will be " equal to the Angels." It is not, therefore, the spiritual essence of the latter which accounts for their immortality, but the will of God. He willed that they should never die, even although they should be guilty of sin ; but in this respect they have no pre-eminence above the souls of men, which are not injured by the stroke of death, but merely separated from that portion of matter, which they had animated for a time, and are destined to animate again.

The following observations relate exclusively to good Angels ; and I shall reserve what I have to say concerning the Angels of darkness to another occasion.

First, They are intelligent creatures, and are endowed with a high degree of knowledge and wisdom. That this was the belief of the Jews, is evident from the words of the woman of Tekoah to David : " As an Angel of God, so is my Lord the King, to discern good and bad." And again she says, " My Lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an Angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth." * She expressed, no doubt, the common belief of her country respecting Angels ; and although in itself it is not decisive, yet we are led to assent to it by a consideration of the case. They are confessedly creatures of a higher order than men ; they enjoy opportunities of discovery which we do not possess ; and they are free from those impediments to which we are subjected by our connexion with the body, which limits our range of observation, and lays us under the necessity of receiving knowledge by the medium of the senses. A degree of knowledge was

* 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20.

originally communicated to them proportionable to the superiority of their nature and rank, by which they were qualified for the service of their Maker. It has since been augmented by observation and experience, and by immediate revelations; and, it may be presumed, will go on progressively for ever. There is no doubt that the highest attainments of men, when compared with theirs, are like those of children; that subjects which we grasp after a tedious and painful investigation, are perceived by them at a glance; that many things, which to us are mysteries, to them are plain; and as they are represented as inquiring into redemption,* and learning wisdom by the Church,†—not, you will observe, from its lessons, but from the Divine dispensations towards it,—that wonderful scheme presents itself to them with a glory, of which the most enlightened saint upon earth can form only a faint conception. Still, however, it must be considered, that their knowledge is limited, and on this ground, we have stated it to be progressive. They could not know all things, unless they were equal to God; they do not know the secrets of the heart, which are open only to his eye. We might indulge in curious speculations concerning the mode in which they acquire knowledge, and hold communication with one another; but we could not arrive at any thing satisfactory. Our own spirits being united to a body, and perceiving external things by the senses, we can form no idea of the operations of a pure spirit, nor understand how it is made sensible of the existence, and qualities, and motions of matter, and material beings.

Secondly, They are holy beings. Such they must have been when they came from the hand of God, pure like the ray of light when it issues from the sun; and such, many of them have continued, although others have fallen into sin. Hence they are called the holy Angels,‡ and the ministers of God who do his will; || and they are exhibited as patterns to us in the prayer which Christ taught his disciples: “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” They have now existed during almost six thousand years; but not in one instance have they done any thing which was displeasing to God, nor has a single sinful thought arisen in their minds. They were once tempt-

* 1 Pet. i. 12. † Eph. iii. 10. ‡ Mat. xxv. 31, &c. || Ps. ciii. 21.

ed; but they indignantly resisted the solicitation of counsel and example; they have witnessed many a foul display of human and angelical depravity, but have not received the slightest moral taint. Their constant employment is to praise God and to serve him; and his commands are always listened to and cheerfully obeyed. Their piety is manifested in their reverence and humility; and the holiness of the Divine nature is contemplated by them with reverence and delight. They cover their faces with their wings, and cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." * It is on this account, that although they are benevolent beings, they feel no reluctance to execute the judgments of God upon his enemies; and they will perform, with pleasure, the final office of this kind, by gathering "out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," and casting "them into a furnace of fire." †

Thirdly, They are beings of great activity and strength. We connect activity with the idea of a spirit, especially a spirit not encumbered with material organs. That of the Angels is represented by the description of them as creatures who have wings and fly. It is manifestly figurative, because they are pure spirits; but it is intended to express the speed with which they execute their commissions, as of all visible creatures, those move with the greatest velocity which have wings. A created spirit must exist in some definite portion of space, and its motion must consist in its removal from one place to another; but what is the motion of a spirit we cannot tell. It is swifter no doubt than that of bodies; and there is a passage in Scripture, which shews how rapidly they can transport themselves from heaven to earth. As soon as Daniel began his supplication recorded in the ninth chapter of his Book, the command was given, and the Angel Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched him while he was yet praying about the time of the evening oblation. "Thinkest thou," said our Lord to Peter, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of Angels?" ‡ In strength they are said to excel, § and in Scripture they are called mighty Angels. § We connect our

* Isa. vi. 3. † Mat. xiii. 41, 42. ‡ Mat. xxvi. 53. § Ps. ciii. 20. § 2 Thess. i. 7.

idea of strength with that of bodily organs, as the instruments by which it is exerted ; but we should reflect that the seat of strength is in the mind. It is the mind which moves the members of the body, and puts forth its energies by them. All that we know is, that when the soul wills, the body moves ; we see the effect, and know the cause, but the relation between them we cannot explain ; and there is reason to believe that, if such had been the will of God, our soul might have acted with equal power upon any other piece of matter, either constantly or occasionally. The relation between soul and body, in consequence of which they influence each other, is unquestionably an arbitrary constitution. We can therefore feel no difficulty in conceiving spirits without bodies, to be endowed by the Creator with power to act upon matter in general, just as our souls have power to act upon our bodies ; and the *modus* is not more inconceivable in the one case than in the other, or rather is equally inexplicable in both. We know, that Angels are possessed of this power, for they are represented in Scripture as defending the bodies of some, and inflicting plagues upon those of others ; and as performing stupendous works, which far exceed human ability. But there are limits to their power as well as to ours. We must not attribute to them the power of working real miracles, or suspending the laws of nature, for this is the province of Omnipotence. They cannot call back the separated spirit from the invisible world, and raise the corrupted body from the ground : It is “ God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.” *

Lastly, They are happy beings. The recollection of the past creates no uneasiness, and the prospect of the future awakens no fear or anxiety. They have always served God with fidelity, and they will always enjoy his love. Their usual residence is heaven, the region of bliss ; but their felicity is not impaired by their visits to the earth. There they behold many an offensive scene, which must excite strong disapprobation ; but no disquieting emotion is felt. They have acts of vengeance to perform ; but, as we have already observed, they detest sin, and glow with zeal for the glory of

* Rom. iv. 17.

God, and perform, therefore, with pleasure any service which will redound to his honour. "In heaven, the Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." * They enjoy the beatific vision, and must, therefore, be happy ; but let us not think that they are deprived of it when they are sent on errands to other parts of the universe. God is still near to them, and they retain a full sense of his love.

We know little concerning the external economy of those glorious spirits ; but from some passages in Scripture it has been inferred that there are different ranks and degrees among them. The Platonic philosophers divided their genii or demons into three orders, the supra-celestial, the celestial, and sub-celestial. The same number of orders has been assigned by the Jews ; and a similar division has been adopted by some Christian writers. Among these the chief place belongs to Dionysius, the Areopagite, or rather to the person who assumed his name and, under its authority, gave to the world his reveries respecting the heavenly hierarchy. According to him, there are three classes, the supreme, the middle, and the last : the supreme comprehending cherubim, seraphim, and thrones ; the middle comprehending dominions, virtues, and powers ; and the last comprehending principalities, archangels, and angels. Each of these classes is subdivided into three, so that upon the whole, there are nine orders. This is a baseless fabric of fancy, which could obtain credit only among those, who, believing the author to be the real Dionysius, were persuaded that he had derived his knowledge from immediate revelation, or from the mouths of the Apostles.

Whoever was the author of these pretended discoveries, he was unquestionably chargeable with intruding into things not seen. We cannot safely proceed a single step farther than the Scriptures lead us. All that we learn from them, is the different names which are given to the spirits of light ;—cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, angels, and archangel in the singular number, for I do not find that it ever occurs in the plural. But we cannot tell what is the ground of these names ; whether they are expressive of a difference of rank, or of office, or originate in

* Matt. xviii. 10.

some other cause ; or why it is that one is called a cherub, and another a seraph. The different names, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, may be used simply to denote the dignity and power of angelical beings, as they are expressive of the highest degrees of honour and authority among men. It has been a subject of dispute, whether the title Archangel is descriptive of a created Angel, or is a designation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the prince or ruler of principalities and powers. By many he is supposed to be meant in the book of Revelation,* when Michael and his Angels are said to have fought against the dragon and his Angels ; and in the book of Daniel, where it is said, “ At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” † In the epistle of Jude, Michael is called the Archangel : “ Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” ‡ But this passage has been considered as unfavourable to the hypothesis, that the Archangel was the Son of God, because it represents him, long prior to his incarnation and humiliation, as under the authority of law, and abstaining from opprobrious language from reverence for God. The Archangel seems to be plainly distinguished from our Saviour in the following words, “ The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God ;” || for if the voice of the Archangel means the voice of Christ himself, we can see no reason why it should be spoken of as the voice of a different being. Besides, in the tenth chapter of Daniel, Michael, who is elsewhere called the Archangel, is said to be “ one of the chief princes ;” § a title which could not with propriety be given to our Lord, who is not one of the Angels, but above them all, the head of all principality and power. The phrase “ one of the chief princes,” if there is a reference to Angels, as the name Michael implies, would lead us to think that there are several chiefs or leaders of the army of heaven ; and consequently, that there is a subordination established among them, although

* Rev. xii. 7. † Dan. xii. 1. ‡ Jude 9. || 1 Thess. iv. 16. § Dan. x. 13.

the details are unknown. It is remarkable, however, as I have already observed, that Archangel is always used in the singular number. We must leave the question undecided, and may be content to remain in uncertainty, as it is not an article of faith.

God employs Angels in the administration of the affairs of providence ; not, however, because he stands in need of their assistance, but for reasons with which we are not fully acquainted. This was represented to Jacob in a dream, when he saw “ a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reaching to heaven ; and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending upon it.” * This representation justifies the saying of our great epic poet, that

“ Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep.” †

We do not suppose that by them the great laws of nature were established, and are upheld ; for in these we acknowledge the immediate agency of Almighty power ; but that they are concerned, by the direction of the Supreme Ruler, in particular events. There are many passages of Scripture which prove this fact ; some of which will be mentioned when we come to speak of their ministrations to the saints. Angels were employed in the Divine dispensations towards the Israelites, and particularly while they were residing in the wilderness. When God was offended with them after they had set up the golden calf, and worshipped it, he told Moses that he would not go up in the midst of them, but would send an Angel before them. ‡ Upon the earnest prayer of Moses, this threatening was revoked, and the Lord said, “ My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” || But when, on a former occasion, God promised to send an Angel before them, § neither Moses was alarmed, nor the people, for this was not a created Angel, but the Angel of the covenant, and consequently God himself ; and accordingly it is added, “ My name is on him ;” and he is represented as possessed of Sovereign power, to pardon or not to pardon their transgressions. What has been now said is a digression ; but it serves to recon-

* Gen. xxviii. 12.

† Par. Lost, B. iv. l. 677.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 34.

|| Ib. xxxiii. 14.

§ Ib. xxiii. 20.

cile two passages which seem to be at variance, as what is announced as a favour in the one, is viewed as a punishment in the other. But, although God did not send a created Angel before the Israelites, yet those glorious spirits were the ministers of his providence to them. We have explicit notice of their agency in the most solemn transaction in the wilderness, the promulgation of the law with such awful pomp from Mount Sinai. It is called in one place, “the word spoken by Angels,”* and in another is said to have been received, *εἰς διαταγὰς ἀγγέλων*; † a difficult expression, signifying “by the disposition of Angels,” or “by the ministration of Angels,” or, “amidst ranks of Angels.” “The Lord came from Sinai, —and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.” ‡ The interference of Angels in the affairs of the world, is pointed out in the tenth chapter of Daniel; when the person who spoke to him, and was undoubtedly an Angel, informs him that he was opposed by the prince of the kingdom of Persia; and that Michael, one of the chief princes, came to his assistance. || There is another example of the agency of Angels, in the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, who had defied the living God. “It came to pass that the Angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.” § It has been supposed that the instrument was the hot wind which is known in the east, and causes sudden death; and that it is figuratively called the Angel of the Lord, because it was sent by him. But there is no occasion for this attempt to strip the narrative of, what would be called, its poetical machinery, and to render it as agreeable as possible to the principles of philosophy, by bringing forward to view only natural causes. There is the same reason for believing, that a real Angel was concerned in this as in any other case where Angels are mentioned; and whether his purpose was effected by corrupted air or by lightning, it was under his management and direction. Many events which take place in such a manner as

* Heb. ii. 2. † Acts vii. 53. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 2. || Dan. x. 13.
§ 2 Kings xix. 35.

to appear quite natural, may yet be brought to pass by the ministry of Angels. To them, for aught that we can tell, may be referred the unaccountable impressions upon the minds of men ; the presentiments of futurity ; the sudden resolutions, and unpremeditated movements, which seem in themselves to be of little or no moment, but which are followed by consequences of the greatest importance to them, and those with whom they are connected. We are ignorant, in a great measure, of the means by which God governs the world, and particularly the minds of men ; and in this department there may be ample scope for the interference of invisible beings.

I shall devote the remainder of this Lecture to the ministry of Angels to the saints. “ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?” *

First, They have been employed in revealing the will of God to his people. I might produce the instances of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel ; but, as I do not mean to enlarge upon this particular, I only observe, that the Revelation, that prophetic history of the Church to the consummation of all things, was dictated to the beloved disciple by an Angel. “ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass ; and he sent and signified it by his Angel unto his servant John.” †

Secondly, It has been supposed that they suggest good thoughts to the saints. It is acknowledged that we can produce no positive proof from Scripture in favour of this hypothesis ; and some have objected to it as entrenching upon the work of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to enlighten and sanctify the soul. But this is a very weak objection, as it would equally exclude all the assistance which men give to one another in religion, by suggesting topics of pious meditation, and endeavouring to excite holy affections. Reasoning from analogy, would lead us to adopt the affirmative ; for, if the spirits of darkness stir up evil thoughts and passions in the minds of men, why should we not conceive that the spirits of light are equally active in exciting such as are good ?

* Heb. i. 14.

† Rev. i. 1.

Thirdly, It is more certain that Angels are appointed to watch over the saints, and to preserve them from dangers. In two passages of the Old Testament this office is expressly assigned to the Angels:—"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; for he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."* In another place, the Psalmist says, "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."† The same doctrine is taught by our Saviour, when he urges the care of the Angels over those who belong to him, as a reason why the meanest of them should not be despised or ill treated:—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."‡ The design of their ministry is not to defend the saints from every evil or calamity, because it is the will of God that often they should suffer affliction, and trials are over-ruled for their good; but from such other calamities as would not be subservient to this end, they are preserved by their vigilant guardians. They are with them when they lie down and rise up, when they sit in the house and walk by the way. Their agency is not visible and miraculous, like that of the Angel who delivered Peter from prison; || it is secret, and is carried on without disturbing the order of nature.

Fourthly, They are employed, as we have seen, to execute divine judgments upon the enemies of the saints, and thus minister for them, by enfeebling, disarming, and destroying those by whom they would be injured. I have already given an instance in the fate of the Assyrian army which had invaded Judea; and I may remind you of another, recorded in the Acts, the miserable end of Herod the persecutor, who was smitten by an Angel. § In the Revelation of John, which is, indeed, highly figurative, but foretells real events and their causes, Angels are represented as the agents in the terrible revolutions by which the wicked will be punished, and the Church will be delivered. We are not permitted to

* Ps. xci. 10—12. † Ps. xxxiv. 7. ‡ Mat. xviii. 10. || Acts xii. § Ib. 23.

see them, as David was, who beheld an Angel standing over Jerusalem, with a sword in his hand ;* their operations are concealed from us by the veil of natural causes. But it is consoling to the saints to be assured, by testimony which is not to be disputed, that those who are for them are more in number and greater in power than those who are against them ; and that not only is their cause, and that of truth and righteousness, patronized by the Supreme Ruler of the universe, but there are upon its side myriads of glorious spirits, one of whom could crush the combined potentates of the earth.

Fifthly, It is their office to convey the souls of the saints into the mansions of bliss. Having attended them during the journey of life, or at least from the moment of their conversion, they are present at the closing scene ; and when their spirits have escaped from the earthly prison, they fly away with them, and deliver up their precious charge. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it is said that the latter died, and was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom.† Notwithstanding the figurative character of the composition, it may be presumed that our Lord intended this fact to be literally understood. To our natural feelings, a death-bed scene is revolting and afflicting. We behold a helpless human being, emaciated by disease, panting for breath, and convulsed with pain ; his countenance pale, his lips quivering, and his brow bedewed with a cold sweat ; and, with his expiring groans, are mingled the lamentations of his disconsolate friends. But, were not the spiritual world hidden by a veil, we should see the glorious inhabitants of heaven surrounding his bed, and sympathising with the sufferer,—for even the Lord of Angels has a fellow-feeling of the infirmities of his people—yet rejoicing at his un murmuring patience, and his steadfast hope, which looks at a brighter world ; and when the struggle was over, bearing his spirit away to their own abode, where “ there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain.”

Lastly, The Angels will minister for the saints at the second coming of Christ. We know, from Scripture, that they will be his attendants ; and we learn also, that they will have im-

* 1 Chron. xxi. 16.

† Luke xvi. 22.

portant services to perform. By them the saints will be “caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”

At the great harvest of the world, as our Lord has taught us, the angels will be the reapers; and as they will then pluck up the tares, and throw them into the fire, so they will gather the wheat into the garner.† “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”‡

When we are speaking of the ministry of angels, the question naturally occurs, whether there is any foundation for the opinion not only of the Jews, but of many Christians in ancient and modern times, that there are guardian angels; or in other words, that there is assigned to each individual a particular angel, who attends him during the whole course of his life. Some seem to consider this opinion as almost heretical, and reject it as dangerous; although where the danger lies, it is not easy to perceive. It appears to me to be a very harmless opinion, and to be by no means unnatural, as, according to our ideas, a multiplicity of affairs is best managed by a division of labour, and by allotting to each of those who are engaged in it, his particular department. The great objection is, that we have no evidence of its truth. The Scriptures do not enter into details upon the subject, and only say, “He shall give his angels charge over thee,”|| representing the care of the saints as a general concern. There are, indeed, several instances in which a single angel was employed; but it does not hence follow that this was his exclusive province. Our Lord says concerning his disciples, that their angels beheld the face of his Father;§ but nothing can be fairly inferred from this passage, except that the heavenly hosts are appointed to watch over them. The strongest argument is founded on the words of the disciples, who were praying for the deliverance of Peter on the night before his expected execution, and when the servant affirmed that it was he who was knocking at the gate, exclaimed, “It is his angel;”¶ for they could not believe that it was Peter himself. Attempts have been made

* 1 Thess. iv. 17.

† Matt. xiii. 39.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 31.

|| Psalm xci. 11.

§ Matt. xviii. 10.

¶ Acts xii. 15.

to evade this argument, by giving a different meaning to the words ; but I think they are absurd. There is no doubt that these disciples, being Jews, did believe that there were guardian angels ; but, we do not know that any of them were inspired men, and therefore we are not bound to adopt their sentiments, unless they be supported by higher authority.

Christians should be grateful for the care of God exercised towards them by the ministry of Angels, and should admire that wonderful economy which has united the two great families of heaven and earth, which sin had separated, and inspired with aversion and hostility. What a high honour is conferred upon them, in having such guardians ! How safe are they under their protection ! and with what caution and reverence should they act in the presence of witnesses so august and holy !

LECTURE XXXIX.

ON ANGELS.

FALLEN ANGELS.—REMARKS ON THEIR FALL.—ITS EFFECTS UPON THEIR MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES, AND UPON THEIR STATE OR CONDITION.—THEIR SUBORDINATION TO SATAN.—THEIR EMPLOYMENT.—THEIR POWER OVER THE BODIES OF MEN.—DEMONIACS.—POWER OF FALLEN ANGELS OVER THE MINDS OF MEN, CONSIDERED.

It appears from Scripture, that there are two classes of Angels, the same in nature, but distinguished by their moral qualities, their employments, and the usual place of their residence. Those of the one class are holy, are engaged in the service of God, and inhabit the regions of light. Those of the other class are depraved, are active in propagating sin and misery among the human race, and are doomed to dwell in the region of darkness and sorrow. Of these I purpose to speak in this Lecture.

I begin with observing, that the whole angelical order was created pure; and this position is not only countenanced by Scripture, but is necessary to vindicate the character of God. The question concerning the origin of evil, caused much perplexity to the speculative men of the heathen world; and in order to account for it, they had recourse to the hypothesis of the malignity of matter, or to that of the existence of an Evil Being, who was independent upon the Author of good. But as the latter supposition is repugnant to reason, as well as to revelation; so the former, which, by the bye, is unintelligible and absurd, is totally inapplicable to the case of spiritual

beings, who have no connexion with matter, and therefore could not be tainted by it. They must, therefore, have existed in a state of innocence ; for, were we to admit the idea, that they were originally corrupt, we should charge their sin upon their Maker. But, as he is essentially holy, it was impossible that there should be the slightest stain of sin upon any intelligent creature, when it came from his hands ; as only pure light can proceed from the sun. The angels of whom we are speaking, are said not to have kept their first estate ;* from which words it is plain, that they were once in every respect similar to the angels who stand in the presence of God.

How long they retained their integrity, we are not able to determine, as Scripture is silent ; but, as we have no reason to think that angels were created before our world, we may say of them, as well as of men, that “being in honour, they abode not.” It was by the agency of one of them that our first parents were seduced ; and although it is absurd to suppose that the fall of man took place in the same day on which he was made, yet there is good ground to suppose, that paradise was only for a short time the abode of purity and peace.

When we think of the mode in which sin could find admission into the mind of a creature perfectly holy, we perceive that much obscurity rests upon the subject. If, as is necessarily implied, the understanding were free from error, and clearly apprehended the nature and relation of things, how could it form a false judgment, or be imposed upon by the sophistry of others ? If the heart was full of love to God, and under the uncontrolled influence of his authority, how could any representation excite a wayward affection, or a desire which it was improper to indulge ? The difficulty is greater in the case of angels than in that of man ; for, as he was connected with matter, and subject to the influence of the senses, his attention might be diverted, and his judgment biassed, by allurements addressed to them, while pure spirits were secured against any such temptations. But, it is vain to bring forward arguments to prove that a fact is impossible or improbable, if we have it in our power to shew that it has actually taken place.

* Jude 6.

As men sinned in the earthly paradise, through the subtilty of a tempter, so angels sinned in the heavenly paradise, without a tempter; for although we do not possess a history of their apostasy, yet we know that they were not solicited, as man was, by some being of superior artifice, because they were the sole inhabitants of heaven.

There has been a diversity of opinion with respect to the sin of the angels. Some of the ancients imagined that it was lust, having given this sense to these words in Genesis, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."* It is not possible to conceive a more ridiculous opinion, since, besides other absurdities, which are so obvious that it is not necessary to point them out, it makes the fall of angels long posterior to the fall of man, in direct contradiction to the Scripture, which affirms that he was seduced by the devil. A modern author, Cocceius, has maintained that, as we read of no prior sin of the angels, their first sin consisted in tempting our first parents; not perceiving, that he mistakes the effect for the cause, as it is plain that they must have sinned, before the idea of seducing others could have entered into their minds. Others have thought that their sin was envy; envy either of those angels who were superior to them in rank and dignity, or of man, whom God had created in his own image, and invested with dominion over this lower world. Lastly, the most common opinion is, that their sin was pride, and it is founded on these words of an Apostle: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil."† But how pride arose, it is not so easy to tell. There was no being to solicit them to it, or to suggest it. But their own rank might be their temptation. Concentrating their thoughts upon their own excellences, and admiring them, they might gradually forget their relation to God as their Creator. They might lose the sense of their dependence upon him; and as soon as this feeling was suspended, humility was at an end, and a train of arrogant imaginations and claims would occupy its place. They would then see only themselves; their self-importance would be flattered by

* Gen. vi. 2.

† 1 Tim. iii. 6.

the view ; and having erred in heart, they might proceed openly to renounce their allegiance to God. Milton has supposed that their pride was excited by a command to all the heavenly powers to do homage to the Son of God as their Lord ; that Satan, who was higher than the rest,

“ could not bear

Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired ;”*

and that the armies under his command listened to his counsel, and joined in his revolt :

“ Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
The supple knee ? Ye will not, if I trust
To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves
Natives and sons of heaven.”†

His powerful imagination has wrought out a sublime description of the apostasy and overthrow of angels, from a single passage in the book of Revelation, which, however, relates to a different subject. “ And there was war in heaven ; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not ; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world ; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”‡ Amidst this diversity of opinion, the most probable is that which makes pride the first sin of angels ; but the means by which it was excited, and the mode in which it operated, are unknown.

Angels were not placed under a federal head, like the human race, which existed in the beginning solely in its progenitors, and was to be deduced from them in successive generations. As they were all created at once, each individual seems to have been committed to his own care, and was to stand or fall according to his personal conduct. The only effect which one could have upon another, was by example, and counsel, and excitation to good or evil. Had there been a federal representation among angels as among men, the whole order would have shared alike in its consequences. The individuality of the moral agency of angels, if I may speak so, is manifest from the fact, that while some revolted,

* Par. Lost, B. v. 664.

† Ib. 787.

‡ Rev. xii. 7—9.

others maintained their allegiance. Hence arises a new subject of speculation. It does not appear that the apostasy of angels was successive, or that some apostatized at one time, and some at another; but we have some reason to believe that the revolt was simultaneous. How, then, was the concurrence of a multitude obtained? It is incredible that the same thought should, at the same moment, have suggested itself to myriads; or that, without any external cause, the same temptation should have affected so many independent minds. It is probable, therefore, that, as on earth, the woman being deceived enticed her husband, so in heaven one angel, or a few angels, having admitted sin into their thoughts and affections, exerted their influence with success upon others; and that, although the address to his followers, which our great poet has put into the mouth of Satan, is a mere creation of fancy, yet by some similar means a general conspiracy was formed. The Scriptures favour the conclusion, that there was one angel with whom it originated, by the pre-eminence which it assigns to him, and by speaking of "the devil and his angels."

It is impossible to tell how many angels were engaged in this revolt. They are represented as many; but nothing is said about their number. The idea that they amounted to a third part of the inhabitants of heaven, has arisen from a mistaken view of a passage which relates to a different subject. "And his tail," that is, the tail of the dragon, "drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." *

The fall of angels effected no change in their nature. With respect to their essence, they are still pure spirits, immortal, and possessed of great power and activity. But a change has taken place in regard to their qualities, intellectual and moral. Originally of a higher order of creatures than man, they retain their superiority in mental ability, although it cannot be doubted that it is greatly impaired. Man did not, in consequence of his fall, cease to be a rational creature; he has even now more understanding than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and is capable of high exertions of intellect. Yet, his knowledge is more laboriously acquired

* Rev. xii. 4.

than it would have been, if sin had not shed its malignant influence upon his body and mind, is far more limited, and is mixed with many errors arising from the illusions of sense, and the influence of prejudice. It is agreeable to analogy to conceive, that the intellectual powers of fallen angels have been blighted ; that their understandings are obscured, and perverted by their passions ; and that their wisdom, which has degenerated into cunning, often leads them astray, and involves them in perplexity and confusion. Their moral qualities have undergone a total change. Of their original holiness, not a vestige remains. Sin is now so natural to them, that it seems almost to be their essence ; it is the element in which they live and move. Sin is the subject of their thoughts, and gives a character to all their actions. Evil is their only good. There is an important difference between them and men, which is worthy of particular attention. The depravity of men is, in some degree, checked and concealed by certain natural feelings and affections, which, although not virtuous, have the effect of virtue, in restraining them from acts of malice and cruelty, and leading them to perform deeds of justice and beneficence. The wisdom of God has permitted these to remain, because the earth would have been turned into a scene of confusion, society would have been dissolved, and the human race would have been extinguished, if the propensities of the human heart had been permitted to operate without control. But we have no ground to believe that there is any thing analogous to these affections and feelings in apostate angels. Sin rages in them unrestrained ; every malignant and furious passion boils within them ; and if they experience any relief from their sufferings, it consists in wreaking their malice and cruelty upon man. We may judge how sin produced immediately its full effect upon them, from the conduct of the tempter. He had been recently expelled from heaven, and what was his first work ? He visited our earth with the most nefarious and vindictive design, to mar its beauty, and to poison and destroy human nature in its source ; and he accomplished it by a train of deliberate falsehood, and systematic cruelty. There was no relenting at the thought of a whole race being involved in eternal misery ; his

dark mind rejoiced in the prospect of myriads for ever enduring the same agonies with himself. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." * This passage is strong, and illustrates in a very striking manner the depravity of fallen angels; for what is said of one, is true of them all. The devil is a murderer and a liar, cruel and false. It is his nature to be so. He does not learn falsehood from another, nor is he solicited to it by another; it comes spontaneously from himself; he brings it from the evil treasure of his heart; "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own."

Various names are given to fallen angels in the Scriptures, which are descriptive of the depravity of their nature. They are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, lying spirits, spiritual wickednesses, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Their leader is denominated Satan or the adversary, the devil or the accuser, Apollyon or the destroyer, the prince and god of the world, the dragon or the old serpent, and he who has the power of death.

The existence of such beings has been denied by many, and all that is said concerning them in Scripture has been explained in a figurative manner. It has been objected, that the common notion of a devil, having other wicked spirits under his command, is a modification of the doctrine of two principles, which was held by some nations in the east, and was adopted by the Gnostics and Manichees, who, in the first ages, gave so much trouble to the church. It seems to some men to be inconsistent with just ideas of the Almighty power and moral character of God, to suppose that there are malignant spirits continually employed in opposing his designs, and seducing his creatures. But all our reasonings concerning the fitness or unfitness of any thing, are superseded by an authoritative declaration of Scripture. The attempt to explain away its testimony is irreverent, and completely fails; for we may as well deny the existence of good as of bad angels, and turn into allegory any historical narration. It is not more repugnant to the honour of God, that there should

* John viii. 44.

be invisible agents who oppose his designs, than that the same thing should be done by embodied spirits, or by men, who daily trample upon his laws ; or that we should be tempted by them, than that we should solicit one another to sin. The Christian doctrine concerning the devil and his ministers is very different from that of the ancient Persians, or of those sects who held that there was an evil being co-existing with the good, and carrying on perpetual war against him. Besides that it is not liable to the difficulty involved in the idea of a being originally and necessarily evil, it preserves the absolute supremacy and independence of the Creator ; for the devil is represented, not as self-existent, and exempt from his authority, but as one of his creatures, who, having become wicked by his own choice, is permitted to live and to act according to his depraved inclinations, but is under the constant restraint of Divine power, so that there are limits beyond which he cannot pass, and his ultimate designs are counteracted and frustrated. The evil, which prevails in the creation, does not exist in spite of the Creator, but because he did not choose to prevent it ; and it will be over-ruled to his glory. The devil is his subject, and his minister ; for he makes his wrath, as well as the wrath of man, to praise him, and the remainder of it he restrains. It is probable that the oriental doctrine of two principles originated in the traditionary account of an evil being who had revolted from the Creator ; and that the extravagant stories of the Gnostics concerning *Æons*, as they called them, who existed in the *pleroma* of the Deity ; the creation of the world by one or more of them ; the corruption of the human race by their influence ; and the continual opposition which they made to the Supreme Being ; were a distorted representation of the fact, that some of the angels of heaven had fallen, and seduced mankind to join in the rebellion.

The angels who sinned were expelled from heaven, as being unworthy to enjoy its felicity, and incapable of taking any part in its employments. “ God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”* He

* 2 Pet. ii. 4.

cast them into *Tartarus*, for Peter uses the word *ταρταρως*. Neither the verb, nor the substantive *ταρταρος*, occurs in any other place of the New Testament, although frequent in Greek writers; and it is, therefore, from them, that we must learn its meaning on this occasion. Now by *Tartarus*, they understood the lowest of the infernal regions, the place of darkness and of punishment; in which those, who had been guilty of impiety towards the gods, and of great crimes against men, were confined and tormented. The word, as adopted by the Apostle, conveys the same general idea. Whatever mistakes the heathens committed with respect to the local situation of *Tartarus*, and the nature of its punishments, Peter, retaining the radical sense of the term, undoubtedly uses it in this passage as equivalent to hell. That is the region assigned to the apostate spirits; and in the sentence of the last judgment, by which wicked men are also doomed to it, it is said to have been "prepared for the devil and his angels." It is represented as a region of darkness and sorrow. Darkness and light, when spoken of in relation to spirits, are metaphorically used; since, not having bodily senses, they are not affected, as we are, by the presence and absence of the sun. The darkness of *Tartarus* is therefore significant of the deprivation of all joy, and all hope. Having incurred the wrath of their Creator, the fallen angels can experience only evil, and must utterly despair of any favourable change. The positive misery of their state, is also described by figurative language. It is "everlasting fire," which is prepared for the devil and his angels; but spirits can no more be affected by fire than by light. But, as fire applied to the human body causes the most excruciating pain, this image has been chosen to awaken the idea of the most dreadful torment; and that the mind can suffer without the body, or while no injury is done to it, and there is no derangement of its parts, we all know by experience. The fallen angels are wretched as well as wicked. The passage, indeed, which I have quoted, represents them as reserved to the judgment of the great day; and in the Gospels we hear them asking our Saviour, why he had come to torment them before the time; but we are not to infer that at present they are exempt from suffering. These

words merely imply that the time of vengeance is not fully come, and that there is reserved for them a more dreadful punishment than that which they are at present enduring.

Although the angels are said to have been cast down into Tartarus, and there to be reserved in chains, we are not to conclude that they are constantly confined to that place. The term, chains, is evidently figurative, and signifies the irreversible sentence by which they are doomed to perdition, or the Almighty power of God by which they are secured. It appears from their history, that they are prisoners at large. The work assigned to them is carried on upon earth; and they must therefore be permitted frequently to visit it. Yet we say, that their proper habitation is Tartarus or hell, as heaven is the habitation of the good angels, although they are much in our world, and may be employed in various offices, in other regions of the universe. After the final judgment, they will be shut up for ever in their dismal dungeon. There will then be a complete separation between the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of light. The latter will be the scene of righteousness and peace; no evil shall ever sully its purity, or disorder disturb its harmony; the tempter shall not find entrance into the celestial paradise.

We have seen that it is not perfectly certain that there is a subordination among the angels of light; but that it exists among the angels of darkness, is manifest from such expressions as these: "the devil and his angels," and "the prince of the devils," and by the appropriation of the name, Satan, to an individual, and the mention of "his kingdom," of which all other wicked beings, human and angelical, are subjects. It has been remarked by a late critic, that the word *διαβολος*, which is rendered *devil* in our version, but properly signifies an *accuser*, is used in the plural number in reference to men, but never occurs in that number when spirits are the subject of discourse. Among these there is only one *διαβολος*; and other impure spirits are expressed by a different name, and are called demons. The distinction is lost in our translation, where both words are indiscriminately rendered *devil*; but it ought to be attended to, as there was undoubtedly a reason for it, although we are not able to shew in what the difference con-

sists. The words *δαίμων*, and *δαίμονιον*, were used by the Greeks to designate an order of beings who were accounted divine, but inferior to the higher gods, and were the objects of religious worship. To this order belonged the souls of heroes, legislators, and other great men, who were deified after their death. Of the demons acknowledged by the heathens, some were good, and others were bad; but, in their writings, the word generally occurs in a favourable sense. It is in a bad sense that the word is used in the New Testament; in all those cases at least, which relate to the spirits who are associated with the devil, and are under his direction. The fact, then, that there is one devil, and that the rest are called demons, that these demons are his angels, and that the kingdom which they are endeavouring to uphold and extend, is his kingdom, leads to the conclusion, that a monarchy is established among them. With respect to its origin, we cannot tell whether it is founded on a subordination, which existed prior to their fall; or is the result of their voluntary submission; or is an arrangement imposed by the will of Providence, for some end to us unknown. We are equally ignorant whether, while one is evidently chief, there may not be a gradation of ranks; as in the kingdoms of men, some, although inferior to the sovereign, are superior to their fellow subjects.

It remains to inquire, in what manner evil angels are employed; and it will appear that their work corresponds with the depravity of their nature, and the malevolence of their dispositions. It is their perpetual aim to dishonour God, and to injure men; and in prosecuting their designs, they submit to no restraint but Almighty power.

We learn from the Scriptures, that they are permitted to exercise power over the bodies of men, and over other things which may have an effect upon them. I might appeal for proof to the first chapter of Job, in which, licence is represented as having been given to Satan to make trial of that good man, and a series of calamities to have ensued, that terminated, as we see in the second chapter, in a painful and loathsome disease, which must be considered as having been caused by the agency of that malignant spirit. That it is a true history,

is evident from the references to it in other parts of Scripture, which are altogether inconsistent with the supposition that it is an allegorical description, or dramatic representation, of more recent events. But, if there should be any doubt to what extent the narrative is figurative, I may appeal, in the next place, to the possessions related by the Evangelists, which are instances of power exercised by evil spirits upon the bodies of men, and of the infliction of diseases by them. It has been alleged, indeed, that these were not cases of real possession; that the patients laboured under common diseases, as madness and epilepsy; that the Jews believed that these were caused by the influence of evil spirits; that the Evangelists accommodate their account of them, and of the cure, to the popular belief; and that the patients are called *δαιμονιζόμενοι*, and are said *δαιμονιον εχειν*, solely because the vulgar thought so. But it has been justly observed, that “when we find mention made of the number of demons in particular possessions, their actions so expressly distinguished from those of the men possessed, conversations held by the former in regard to the disposal of them after their expulsion, and accounts given how they were actually disposed of; when we find desires and passions ascribed peculiarly to them, and similitudes taken from the conduct which they usually observe, it is impossible to deny their existence, without admitting that the sacred historians were either deceived themselves in regard to them, or intended to deceive their readers.”* We must proceed still farther, and say, that our Lord himself favoured the deception, encouraged the people in a foolish superstitious notion, and gave a false representation of the nature of his miracles. It is objected against the credibility of possessions, that they were peculiar to that age, and that we have no certain accounts of them in any prior or subsequent period. It is beyond doubt, however, that they have been supposed to exist in other ages; but, granting that they were confined to the time of the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles, would it not be sufficient to say in answer to the objection, that they were then permitted to furnish an opportunity for displaying the power of our Saviour over the

* Campbell on the Gospels. Preliminary Dissert. vi.

spirits of darkness, and to give sensible attestation to the general design of his coming, which was to "destroy the works of the devil?"* To affirm that there never were possessions at any other period, is to reject the testimony of the Jews and other nations, not upon the authority of more credible testimony, but upon presumptions and abstract reasoning. "It is probable," says Dr Macknight, "that the possessions mentioned in the Gospels, were diseases carried to an uncommon height by the presence and agency of demons. And if this is allowed to have been the true nature of these possessions, there will be found, without doubt, abundant examples of the like possessions in all ages. For there is nothing absurd in supposing that there always have been, and still are in the world, many incurable diseases, which, though commonly attributed to natural causes, are really the effect of the invisible operation of devils, who have power given them for that purpose."†

That the fallen angels exercise power over the minds of men, is an alarming truth, which is proved, in the first place, by the seduction of our first parents; and, in the second place, by many facts, and declarations, and admonitions, in the Scriptures. The mode of their agency is concealed; and as it would be vain to make an attempt to discover it, so it would serve no valuable purpose to indulge in conjectures. Of one thing we are certain, that they have no such control over men as to compel them to obey; for such a power would be destructive of moral agency, and would therefore in a great measure defeat their own design, which is to involve us in guilt; they can succeed only by influencing the volition, through the medium of the understanding, and imagination, and passions.

The devil was the lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets under the Mosaic dispensation; and his concern in the idolatry which prevailed over the whole earth, with the exception of Judea, prior to the incarnation of Christ, may be inferred from his declaration when the seventy disciples returned from their mission, and related their success, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." He anticipated the result of the preaching of the gospel, which would

* 1 John iii. 8.

† Macknight's *Harmony*. Essay on the Demoniacs.

effect the overthrow of all the false religions of mankind ; and by representing this event as the fall of Satan, he intimated that he patronised them, and by their means, upheld the interests of his kingdom. " We wrestle not," says an Apostle, " against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." * He may be understood to speak of the conflict which is going on in all ages, between fallen angels and the followers of Christ ; but he refers, I presume, in a particular manner, to the contest in which the Apostles were engaged with them, while the former attacked, and the latter defended the various systems of error and corruption, by which the knowledge, and worship, and laws of God had been almost banished from the earth. The powers of darkness did not assume a visible form, and wage open war with the servants of Christ ; but they influenced the minds of their own votaries, and excited a vigorous resistance by all the arts and all the force of which they were possessed. During the reign of heathenism, Satan was emphatically the god of this world, over which he ruled with uncontrolled dominion. Princes, priests, the common people, and philosophers, were his subjects ; for all had departed from the true God, and wandered in the mazes of error and vice. It is a curious question, whether evil spirits had any concern in the heathen oracles ; and while some affirm, others deny. It would be absurd to suppose, that they could predict future events, of which the causes were not then in existence, and which depended upon the volitions of free agents ; for, of such future things they are as ignorant as man, and it is the prerogative of God to declare the end from the beginning. Some future things, however, men may foretell, because they are in a train to be accomplished, and the sagacity of spirits is greatly superior to ours. If it could be proved that the heathen oracles ever revealed any thing secret, any thing which was done at a distance, any thing which the priests could not have known by natural means, we should be under the necessity of admitting supernatural agency. But their responses were commonly obscure, ambiguous, clogged with

* Eph. vi. 12.

conditions, on the failure of any of which the credit of the oracle was saved, although the event did not take place; and in general, there is reason to believe, that they were managed by the dexterity of the priests. In whatever manner we decide this question, there can be no doubt that the monstrous fabric of paganism was upheld by the artifice of Satan and his ministers. Its overthrow is described in the Revelation by a war between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels, and the expulsion of the latter from heaven.

There is the same authority for affirming, that he was active in the great apostasy from the truth, which prevailed over Europe in the dark ages, and still subsists in many of its kingdoms. When the devil is cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, it is with a design that he should no more deceive the nations;* from which it appears that it was he who formerly deceived them. It is the dragon, the old serpent, who gives to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority;"† and the coming of the man of sin is said to be "after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;"‡ that is, the man of sin came in the same manner as Satan came when he seduced the nations into heathen idolatry; and he acts in concurrence with him, and by his assistance. If heathenism was his offspring, he may justly be considered as the father of popery, which is paganism revived, and, with the change of some of its tenets, and the substitution of new names for the old, retains its idolatry and its ritual observances. The signs, and powers, and lying wonders by which it is supported, are not real miracles, (for if evil spirits could perform these, they would be no criterion of a divine commission,) but appearances of miracles, effected by superior knowledge of nature, by sleight of hand, and by other contrivances; which, however, may be said to be after the working of Satan, because, by such arts, he had deceived men in former ages, and they are arts which no man could use but by his instigation. Whether evil spirits ever interposed any farther for the maintenance of the antichristian system, I pretend not to say; but, if all the stories in their legends

* Rev. xx. 7, 8.

† Ib. xiii. 2.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.

are true, it cannot be doubted that they have. One thing, however, is certain, that such of the miracles as have been subjected to examination, have been discovered to be tricks of worthless monks and saints, to impose upon an ignorant credulous people.

In ancient times, the heathens were addicted to magic, and the profane science obtained credit among the Jews, who pretended that they had been taught it by Solomon. It was founded on a supposed intercourse with demons, by whose aid men were enabled to perform many wonderful works. But there is every reason to think, that there was nothing real in it, and that the whole was a system of delusion and imposture. In more modern times, a similar art has been known by the name of witchcraft, which avowedly consists in a correspondence with wicked spirits. The dealers in this art were supposed to have entered into a compact with the devil, by which they engaged to be his servants, on condition that he should invest them with preternatural power, of the effects of which marvellous stories are current among the vulgar. Their ideas seem to receive countenance from the Scripture, which makes mention, at least in our translation, of wizards and witches, and dealers in familiar spirits. But, besides that it is difficult to ascertain the precise import of the original terms, it is uncertain whether the persons were really possessed of the art which they professed, or were only pretenders to it. The story of the Witch of Endor favours the former supposition; but there are some circumstances, which will lead an attentive reader to suspect, that she exceeded her art on the occasion referred to, and that the effect was beyond her expectation. Whatever may be determined with respect to those of former times, the more recent tales of wizards and witches are rendered improbable by this circumstance, that, in proportion as knowledge has advanced, such characters have disappeared, and that their existence is now credited only by the most illiterate. There is therefore ground of suspicion, that their whole history may be traced to the ignorance of the ages in which they flourished.

Nothing is more plainly taught in the Scriptures, than that evil spirits are employed in tempting men to sin. The devil is

called "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience;"* the wicked are said to be "of their father the devil,"† and to do his works; and it is affirmed that "he who committeth sin is of the devil."‡ It was Satan who tempted Judas to betray his Master, § and put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to agree together to lie to the Holy Ghost. § His efforts are, in a particular manner, directed against the saints, who are the objects of his envy and hatred, because they have been restored to the favour of God, and are engaged in his service. Our Lord told his disciples, that Satan had desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat; ¶ and an Apostle says in the name of all his brethren, "We are not ignorant of his devices."** With respect to both saints and sinners, he is represented as "a roaring lion, going about, and seeking whom he may devour."††

These, and many other passages, fully prove that fallen angels are employed in endeavouring to draw men into sin, and justify us in believing their agency, although we cannot explain it. It would be endless to attempt to give a particular account of their temptations, which are greatly diversified, and adapted, we may presume, with consummate art, to the varieties in the tempers and circumstances of individuals. They solicit men to pride, to profaneness, to avarice, to sensuality, to malignity; to every evil, in a word, which will dishonour God, and bring ruin upon their souls.

There are two extremes, which, when speaking upon this subject, we should be cautious to avoid. Some seem to ascribe so much influence to Satan, as to represent the human heart as a mere passive instrument in his hand, and trace to him all its wickedness, as if, without his instigation, it would have adopted no errors, and committed no crimes. To him the blame of all its vices and extravagancies is transferred by a sweeping sentence. Others exclude him from having any concern in the depravity of human nature, and find, in man himself, the origin of all the corruptions in principle and practice, which have prevailed on the earth. The Scriptures adopt a middle course; and while they speak, in the strongest

* Eph. ii. 2.

† John viii. 44.

‡ 1 John iii. 4.

§ John xiii. 2.

§ Acts v. 3.

¶ Luke xxii. 31.

** 2 Cor. ii. 11.

†† 1 Pet. v. 8.

terms, of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, they affirm, that its appetites and passions are excited, and drawn forth into action, by an invisible Tempter. When the Prince of this world came to our Saviour, he failed in his design, because he found nothing in him, who was perfectly pure; but, when he comes to us, he finds materials upon which he operates with success.

Hence it appears, that men are in continual danger, and that it assails them from a quarter of which many entertain no suspicion. Christians alone are apprised of it by divine admonitions, and feel the necessity of vigilance, and prayer, and exertion. They are not left alone to struggle with their active and powerful adversaries; but, while heavenly grace is ready to assist them, they are amply provided with the means of defence, and earnestly exhorted to use them. "Put on," therefore, "the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."*

* Eph. vi. 11—18.

LECTURE XL.

MAN IN HIS STATE OF INNOCENCE.

MOAIC ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION OF MAN.—PATTERN AFTER WHICH HE WAS MADE ; THE IMAGE OF GOD.—HIS RESEMBLANCE TO IT IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF HIS SOUL ; THE AUTHORITY WITH WHICH HE WAS INVESTED ; HIS KNOWLEDGE ; AND HIS ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.—HAPPINESS OF MAN'S PRIMEVAL STATE.—ITS DURATION.

WHEN the earth was prepared by the hand of the Almighty, adorned with its sublime and beautiful scenery, and enriched by his liberality, man was introduced into it as his dwelling, and placed at the head of its other inhabitants. In vain, as we have already remarked, should God have displayed the wonders of his power and wisdom, if no being had been raised up to contemplate them, and to offer up the just tribute of praise. All his works glorify him ; but they do so, by manifesting his excellencies to intelligent creatures, who are capable of perceiving the tokens of his presence, and of feeling the devout impressions which these are fitted to make. A world which was a mere solitude, or was inhabited only by animals possessed of no higher powers than instincts and the external senses, would have existed to no purpose worthy of its Maker ; and the art displayed in the arrangement of its parts would have seemed to be a waste of skill. But it appears to be a work worthy of its Author, when we find it peopled by a race of a higher order, who see him in the objects which surround them, and are led by the gifts of his

bounty, to love and adore the Giver. Heaven is his throne ; “ but the earth hath he given to the children of men.” *

The creation of man took place on the sixth day, and was delayed till that time, that the earth might be prepared for his reception. Having made “ the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth, after his kind,” God said, “ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him : male and female created he them.” † It is thus that Moses relates the origin of the human race.

There are two things in these words which deserve particular attention. There is an unusual solemnity observed at the creation of man. While, on the other days, nothing is heard but the simple and majestic command, which is instantly obeyed, “ Let there be light,” “ Let the waters under heaven be gathered together unto one place,” “ Let the earth bring forth grass ;” on this occasion there is something like what we call deliberation and consultation ; a sort of preparation for the work, as if it were of superior importance. This surely may be inferred from the peculiarity of the form, that the creature about to be made, was of a nobler species than the other inhabitants of the earth, and destined to a higher purpose. God was now to crown his lower works, by bringing forward the last and the best of them. The earth being fashioned and furnished, only one thing remained to complete his design ; and he therefore said, Let us now make man.— The other thing remarkable, is the use of the plural instead of the singular pronoun. God said not, “ Let *me* make man,” but “ Let *us* make man after our image.” Different methods have been adopted to account for this unusual mode of expression. He spoke, say the Jews, to the earth, to the heavens, to the elements. I presume that these are words without meaning ; and simply to state this opinion, is to refute it. When we are informed what is meant by God’s

* Psalm cxv. 16.

† Gen. i. 26, 27.

speaking to the elements, or summoning them to join with him in the creation of man, and how man was made after their image, that is, when nonsense is proved to be sense, the opinion will deserve to be considered. Others say that he spoke to the angels; but, as he said, "Let us make man," it follows, upon this supposition, that he called upon them to co-operate with him in the production of his noblest work. Is not this opinion as unintelligible as the former? Did God need the assistance of angels? And what assistance could they give him? The Scripture declares that we have all one Father, and that one God created us;* but now it seems that this information is not correct, and that we have many Creators, the angels having been concerned as well as he, to whom alone we supposed ourselves to be indebted for existence. This fancy being evidently absurd, others have maintained, that God spake in the style which is used by kings; who, although individuals, employ the plural number for greater dignity, or because they are the representatives of the people over whom they reign. But it ought to be considered that this style was altogether unknown in ancient times, and is of modern date; and, consequently, that there would have been an obvious impropriety in using it more than five thousand years prior to its introduction. It would have been misunderstood; it would have been supposed to import that there were more beings, more gods than one, concerned in the creation; and thus, merely for the sake of anticipating a mode of expression which had nothing to recommend it, an occasion would have been presented of leading mankind into the fundamental error of polytheism. The mode of expression, I say, had nothing to recommend it. When strictly examined, it is inaccurate, and cannot be excused on the plea of dignity or majesty, because the singular form is evidently more dignified, as it represents the authority of a sovereign, as concentrated in his single person, and not shared by any other individual upon earth. The most natural and satisfactory account of the use of a plural word, on this occasion, is to suppose a reference to a plurality of persons in the Godhead; which some conceive to be implied in the plural name

* Mal. ii. 10.

of God, Elohim, and which is manifestly signified in several other passages of the Old Testament, that were quoted when I was illustrating the doctrine of the Trinity. With this doctrine the people of God, under the ancient economy, were acquainted; and the language under consideration was not calculated to mislead them. They knew that God, on this occasion, consulted with himself; and inferred from his words, that all the Divine Persons were concerned in the creation of man.

The body of man was made of the dust, or of the earth, and hence the name Adam seems to be derived. The reason for forming it of such mean materials, seems to have been to teach him humility, when, amidst the honours which were to be conferred upon him, as Lord of the inferior creatures, he should reflect that, in one respect, he had the same origin with the beasts of the field. It was calculated also to awaken sentiments of devotion, while he contemplated in his own body an admirable proof of the wisdom and goodness of God, who had constructed a frame of such curious workmanship, out of the dust which our first parent was daily treading under his feet. "I will praise thee," says the Psalmist, "for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."* No description can do full justice to its wonderful mechanism; and whether we consider the form and articulation of the bones, or the muscles by which they are moved, or the nerves which convey feeling and activity to every part, or the circulation of the blood, or the various organs of secretion and digestion, or the action of the lungs, or the senses by which it communicates with the external world, or its external symmetry and features, we must pronounce it to be, in every respect, worthy of its divine Author, and fitted to serve the various purposes of the sentient and intelligent being to whom it belongs. I remark, in passing, that it is only in a secondary sense that the body of man is said to have been created. It was not made of nothing, but of pre-existing matter; but equal power was necessary to produce, out of that matter, flesh, and blood, and bones.

When the body of man was fashioned, "The Lord God," says the sacred historian, "breathed into his nostrils the

* Psalm cxxxix. 14.

breath of life; and man became a living soul." * The language is figurative; for breathing cannot be literally ascribed to God, who is not a corporeal being. The words import at least, that God caused the air to enter into his body, that its several parts might begin their functions, the lungs to respire, the heart to beat, and the blood to circulate. But, although this process may be considered as mechanical, we know that it cannot be carried on merely by mechanical causes. If a body be dead, the introduction of air into the lungs will not set them and the other parts of the system in motion. A living principle is wanted, distinct from the body, upon which its operations depend, as the motion of a machine constructed by human skill is caused by something different from the machine, as water, or steam, or wind. Hence, although we may not be able to prove, that breathing into man the breath of life necessarily implies the communication of this principle, yet the case requires us to understand the words in this sense, especially as the effect is said to have been, that man became a living soul. As we know that the nature of man is compound, consisting of a soul as well as of a body, and no mention is made of the former in any other part of the narrative, we may reasonably conclude that Moses, who certainly would not omit a particular of so much importance, here refers to its creation. The body, which was made of dust, is plainly distinguished from the soul, when the wise man informs us, that at death, "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." † The living soul of man was created, in the proper sense of the term. It is not a quality, but a substance; and as it did not previously exist, it must have been produced out of nothing by the Father of Spirits.

These two constituent parts of human nature were joined together by an invisible and mysterious tie. Although they possess no quality in common, and it might seem, therefore, that they could no more operate upon each other than if they were separated by an interval as wide as the space between heaven and earth, yet, by the will of God, which is the cause of all relations and connexions between created things, the soul moves the body, and the body affects the soul by its

* Gen. ii. 7.

† Eccl. xii. 7.

organs of sense, and all its modifications. Thus united, they constitute one individual, as really as if the essence of man, like that of the angels, had been perfectly simple. We cannot explain the fact, but we are all assured of it by experience.

When Adam had been created, there was not found "a help meet for him."* Among all the living inhabitants of the earth, there was not one who resembled him in shape or in mental endowments; there was not one who was fit to be his associate. Surrounded with creatures of different species, he was placed in a solitude, affording no scope for the exercise of his distinguishing faculties, no means of intellectual intercourse, no objects to awaken the tender sensibilities of the heart. To supply this want, "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."† Upon this narrative it would be useless to attempt a commentary, as we are altogether incapable of advancing a single additional idea to illustrate it. God seems to have chosen this mode of making the woman, instead of forming her also out of the dust, to constitute the closest conjunction between her and Adam, who was destined to be her husband; to be an image of the intimacy of the conjugal relation; and further, to derive the whole human race from one common stock, or to make them all literally of one blood. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."‡ This simple fact, like many other passages of Scripture, has been made the foundation of allegory. Adam sleeping, is a type of Jesus Christ dead upon the cross, and Eve is a figure of the Church, which is consecrated and purified by the blood and water which flowed from his wounded side. But such interpretations of Scripture are fanciful, and although they may please for a moment, will not bear the examination of sober

* Gen. ii. 20.

† Ib. 21, 22.

‡ Ib. 23, 24.

judgment. We have no authority for them but that of their authors, and shall do well not to indulge in them.

Let us proceed to consider the declaration of Scripture, that man was made in the image, and after the likeness of God. I shall not stop to inquire, what is the distinction between image and likeness, or whether there be any difference of meaning: the important truth which we are evidently taught is, that man was so formed, as to bear a resemblance to his Creator. It is almost unnecessary to remark, that it did not consist in his external form, because God having no bodily parts, any configuration of matter could not constitute the impress of his image. When Solomon says, that "God made man upright,"* he does not refer to his erect posture—the *os sublime* of the poet—but to the state of his mind.

First, The image of God may be conceived to consist in the essence of the human soul, which is spiritual like the Divine essence. God created matter, but it was not made after his image, because he is not himself material. But the soul resembles him, because it is uncompounded, indivisible, immortal, capable of thought and activity. The opinions respecting the nature of the soul have been various. Some have supposed that it was fire; some, that it was air; some, that it was a material substance highly refined; and some have denied that there is any soul at all, and have affirmed that sensation and thought are the effects of corporeal organization. But certainly the known properties of matter are the most remote that we can conceive from intelligence; and in the most refined states in which it is found to exist, as in the solar light, or the electric and magnetic fluids, it approaches no nearer to thinking and willing, than in its rudest and dullest form. No man can conceive perception to result from the mere arrangement or the motion of particles of matter, because these things are *toto calo* different, and have no more connexion with thought than colour has, or sweetness, or sound. But it would be superfluous to attempt to prove the immateriality of the soul by a process of reasoning. To Christians the point admits of no doubt, since revelation has decided the question, and pronounced the soul to be a spiritual substance, so indepen-

* Eccl. vii. 29.

dent upon the body, that, when the latter dies, it shall survive in a state of consciousness and activity. In the invisible and nobler part of his nature, man resembles his Maker, who is a Spirit.

Secondly, The image of God in which Adam was made, consisted in the authority with which he was invested. "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."* This dominion implied that all things were placed in a state of subjection to man, and were subservient to him. It has been questioned whether he had a right to make use of the lower animals for food; some supposing that this right was not given till after the flood, when it is first expressly mentioned. Without entering into this controversy, it may suffice to observe, that man was constituted the lord of this lower world; that all the creatures were inspired with respect for him, and submitted to his government; and that he was at liberty to employ them for such ends as an innocent being could desire to accomplish. He might be said to have been created in the image of God, because he was his representative and vicerent.

I proceed to observe, in the third place, That the image of God principally and properly consisted in the qualities of his soul, which were similar to the perfections of his Maker. The words of Moses which we are considering, are illustrated by those of an Apostle, who, addressing Christians on the subject of their restoration to the state from which Adam fell, says, "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him;"† and again, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."‡ From these passages we learn, that the image of God, in which Adam was created, consisted, not merely in intellectual endowments, but also in holy dispositions. As a mirror reflects the brightness of the sun, so did his soul exhibit a counterpart of the moral attributes of God, according to its limited capacity. He who made all other creatures perfect in their kind, did not withhold

* Gen. i. 26.

† Col. iii. 10.

‡ Eph. iv. 28.

from man what constitutes the chief excellence, the noblest ornament of his nature. It was as impossible that he should have come from the hands of his Maker with a mind labouring under ignorance, or a heart tainted with impurity, as that darkness should proceed from light, or evil from good.

The understanding of man, in his primeval state, was illuminated with all necessary knowledge. In speaking upon this subject, there are two extremes which should be avoided. Some reduce the knowledge of the first man almost to nothing, represent him as a child in understanding, although his body was in the maturity of manhood, and maintain that he was left to acquire wisdom by decrees, in the exercise of his faculties upon the objects around him, and under the tuition of experience. But this opinion supposes him to have been less perfect than the lower animals, who were no doubt endowed at once with all their peculiar instincts in perfection; is at variance with the Scripture, which affirms that he was created in the image of God, of which, according to an Apostle, knowledge was a constituent part; and places him in a situation in which he could not, for some time at least, fulfil the design of his creation, and must have been unavoidably exposed to the danger of error. Is it not more rational to believe, that all the knowledge, which was necessary in his circumstances, was at once infused into his mind? Others give an extravagant account of his knowledge, as if it had almost equalled that of angels, and our first parent had been acquainted with all the arts and sciences which have been slowly acquired by his posterity. The truth lies between these extremes. He was neither so ignorant as the former affirm, nor so enlightened as the latter would persuade us. It is enough to maintain, that he possessed all the knowledge that was necessary to him as an intelligent and moral agent. We may presume that his faculties were stronger and more active than those of any of his children; and it may be inferred, from his naming the inferior creatures when they passed in review before him, that his acquaintance with natural objects was extensive and accurate. But the knowledge which chiefly distinguished him in his original state, and was an essential part of the divine image, was the knowledge of God

and his will, of every thing which it behoved him to know, in order to fulfil the end of his creation. He knew himself; he knew his relations to his Maker; he knew the duty which he owed to him; he knew what he had to fear from sin, and what to hope from obedience. This knowledge was not obtained by observation, and inquiry, and reflection, but by immediate inspiration; it was a light from heaven, which shone into his mind from the first moment of his existence. It may be justly called perfect knowledge, because it was distinct, accurate, and full. Man was not ignorant of any thing in which he was concerned; he was not mistaken in any of his notions; he did not, in a single instance, suppose good to be evil, or evil to be good; and as he was sensible of his dependence upon the Author of his being, and looked to him as his guide, so God was always ready to grant to him such new discoveries as might be conducive to his happiness. More knowledge he might have acquired, and would have acquired, by natural means or supernatural revelation, if he had continued in innocence; but his present knowledge was sufficient for his present condition. This is the only perfection in knowledge of which a creature is capable, either upon earth or in heaven. Knowledge absolutely perfect is omniscience, which is an incommunicable attribute of the Creator.

It has been a subject of inquiry, whether our first parents were endowed at once with the knowledge of language, or were left to form a language for themselves. Those who maintain the latter opinion, are compelled to admit that they understood the words in which they were addressed by God, and afterwards by the serpent; but they conceive that the other words in their vocabulary were of their own invention. To state this hypothesis, is to expose it as whimsical and ridiculous. If God inspired them with the knowledge of some words, what good reason can be assigned for supposing that he stopped here, and did not go on to finish what he had begun? Is there any advantage gained by the supposition? Is there a single hint to favour it in the narrative of Moses? Is it more rational than the other opinion, or more analogous to other parts of the Divine procedure? It is a mere conjecture, and a conjecture so manifestly arbitrary, that it de-

serves rather to be laughed at than seriously refuted. For a time, our first parents must have been mute, except that they could repeat the few words in which God had instructed them; for a time, they must have been incapable of celebrating the praises of their Maker, and of carrying on intercourse between themselves, but by signs, like the speechless savages, who never existed except in the brains and writings of dreaming philosophers. Can we allow ourselves to think that man, the chief of God's works, was brought upon the stage in a state so imperfect? No; we believe that he, who infused knowledge into his mind, taught him how to express it in articulate sounds.

I proceed to observe, that another feature of the Divine image consisted in the rectitude of his will, by which I mean, that he was fully disposed to the performance of his duty, or to act according to the light which shone in his mind. As he was a moral agent, we must hold that his will was free; and that it was so, is manifest from the event, for he did turn aside from the path of duty, and make a choice which proved fatal to himself and his posterity. "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." * By freedom of will, however, I do not mean that his mind was in a state of suspense, or of indifference to good and evil. I believe such a state to be impossible, unless it be preceded by complete ignorance of both; and, if possible, to be criminal, because our knowledge of what is right and good should immediately determine the choice. His mind was not *in equilibrio*, like a balance, the scales of which are pressed down by equal weights; he was averse to evil, and inclined only to good; but he might reject the good, and choose the evil. He was not confirmed in purity, as angels and glorified saints are; he was a mutable creature, and might change by an act of volition, and in this consisted his freedom of will. The rectitude of his will is implied in the uprightness which is predicated of him in his original state. His will was in unison with the will of God. He had no desires or inclinations of his own which he was disposed to gratify; his pleasure arose from doing what was pleasing to his Maker. This seems to

* Eccl. vii. 29.

be that righteousness which the Scriptures affirm to be an essential part of the image of God, and which, at the same time, they distinguish from knowledge and holiness, meaning probably, by the latter, the pure thoughts, and affections, and actions, which resulted from it. The state of man in innocence may be illustrated by contrasting it with that of his descendants, in whom there is found an opposition between their convictions of duty and their inclinations. This internal conflict, this rebellion of the will against reason or conscience, was observed and lamented by the Heathens; and every scholar knows the confession or complaint of the poet, that he perceived and approved what was right, but pursued what was wrong :

“ *Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.*”

The Apostle Paul shews, from his own experience, that this conflict takes place even in the regenerated, in consequence of the remains of depravity. “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.” * Hence it is that virtue, although eloquently recommended, and praised in rapturous strains, is often in practice totally disregarded. Notions floating in the head, and, it may be, slightly affecting the conscience, are too feeble to subdue the strong and inveterate aversion of the heart. In the soul of the first man, the most perfect order reigned. His knowledge was not speculative, but practical. His will obeyed the dictates of his enlightened understanding. His perceptions of duty were accompanied with perfect submission to the authority by which it was enjoined. What the first Adam was, we may learn by contemplating the Second, all whose powers harmonized in the service of God, and who accounted it his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work.

Some have affirmed that man did not at first possess this righteousness, but that it was afterwards infused into him. He was innocent, they say, or free from sin, when he was created, but was not positively holy. As, in this state, a con-

* Rom. vii. 23.

flict might have taken place between the inferior and the superior part of his nature, between appetite and reason, righteousness was superadded to check and restrain every disorderly movement. An obvious consequence of this opinion is, that the loss of this righteousness has only placed him in his original circumstances; and that we come into the world just such creatures as Adam was, having as much liberty of will to choose good, and refuse evil, and equally capable of acquiring virtuous habits. It is true that he was subsequently placed in a more advantageous situation, when he was endowed with supernatural gifts; but, wanting these, we are on the same footing on which he stood when he came from the hands of his Maker. It is obvious that this opinion overthrows the Scriptural doctrine of original sin. In opposition to it, we maintain that, although man may be conceived as being without righteousness, yet, in point of fact, Adam never wanted it; that from the beginning, it was an endowment of his nature; that he was holy as soon as he became a living soul; and we found our assertion upon the declaration of Scripture, that God created man in his own image. He did not stamp his image upon him after he was made, but it was the pattern according to which he fashioned him at first.

To illustrate further the subject of original righteousness, I observe that, at his creation, the will of man was wholly and only inclined to good. Had there been any bias of his nature to evil, any tendency to it, however faint, any appetite or passion which was not completely under the government of reason, or rather of the Divine law, he would not have been upright in the full and perfect sense of the word. What we now assert, is opposed to the opinion already stated, that there was a conflict between appetite and reason in man, that he was subject to concupiscence or desire excited by the objects around him, which it might be necessary in some cases to resist. Our appetites and passions, it is said, are not in our power, and do not wait for our permission, but are often moved before we are aware. Now, the constitution of Adam being the same with ours, he must have occasionally felt desires which could not have been gratified with innocence, but which, being involuntary, would not be imputed to him as

sin. In a word, it is maintained, that there was from the beginning a struggle in the human breast, similar to that which takes place in the regenerated, according to the description of an inspired writer, "that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." * This may pass with some men as conclusive reasoning; but it is much of the same kind as if we should say, a man infirm and diseased is never free from pain; and, therefore, a man of a sound constitution, and in good health, is never perfectly at ease. The primeval state of man was so different from his present state, that it would be downright folly to argue from the one to the other. There was then a harmony, a subordination among his faculties, which we can hardly conceive who have daily experience of their disorder. There was such light in his mind, and such love to God in his heart, as retained his appetites in a state of complete subjection. No wandering thoughts or irregular desires found admission into his holy soul. The dominion of the law of God over all the principles of his nature was absolute. It is the effect of the fall, that the connexion established between the intellectual and active powers of the soul is unsettled; that reason and conscience often dictate in vain, and the will rebels against both; that the affections rush headlong upon forbidden gratifications; and man, with all his knowledge, and all his resolutions to the contrary, is hurried away by their violence. But this is a description only of fallen man. In a state of innocence, his soul was like a curious machine, all the parts of which moved in harmony by the force of one master spring, the love of God, which actuated and sanctified all its powers.

It is true, then, that God made man upright, that he was a creature worthy of the Author of his being, the fair image of his excellencies, a mirror from which the unspotted purity of the divine nature was reflected.

Man, being holy, enjoyed all the felicity which was suitable to his nature and his circumstances. His body contained no seeds of disease, and was not subject to languor or pain. The objects around him, arrayed in the freshness of youth, and

* Gal. v. 17.

beautified by the hand of the Creator, were calculated to delight his senses. Work was prescribed to him ; but it was of the easiest kind, and served merely as an agreeable recreation. He was placed in the garden of Eden, where nature appeared in all her loveliness ; a garden which God himself had planted, and in which grew “ every tree which was pleasant to the sight, and good for food.” I shall not stop to inquire in what region it was situated, although many learned men have amused themselves with the inquiry. Some hints are given in the history of Moses ; but they are too general to enable us to come to a certain conclusion. In the midst of abundance man experienced no present want, and felt no anxiety respecting the future ; for unconscious of guilt, he looked up with confident expectation to the goodness of his Maker. And this leads me to remark, that it was not from external objects that his happiness was chiefly derived, but from the intimate fellowship with his Creator to which he was admitted. He rejoiced in his glory, which his enlightened eye contemplated in the splendour of the heavens, and the varied scenery of the earth ; he rejoiced in a sense of his favour, in a feeling of his love ; and assured of his friendship, he reposed without suspicion upon his wisdom and benevolence. All was calm within, and all was peaceful without. He was happy now ; and he should be happy always, if he continued to perform the easy service which was enjoined upon him. Easy it may be justly called, for it consisted in yielding to the bent of his own will, which was inclined only to good, and exercising the holy faculties with which he was endowed. Obedience was natural to him ; and what is conformable to nature is attended with pleasure. How delightful must have been his emotions, while he was employed in admiring, and loving, and praising, and executing the orders of that Being who had lately called him into existence, and showered innumerable blessings upon him ! The life which he led in Paradise was like the life of angels.

The Scriptures have not informed us how long our first parents retained their innocence, and enjoyed the delights of their primeval state. There is room, therefore, for conjecture ; and in this, as in other cases, there have not been wanting

theologians, who have filled up the void with the suggestions of fancy. Some have thought, that they fell on the same day on which they were created, and have even appealed to the authority of Scripture. "Man being in honour abideth not," says the Psalmist, "he is like the beasts that perish."* Now, the word translated *to abide*, signifies *to continue for a night*. Hence these profound critics, presuming that there is an allusion to the first man, boldly conclude that he did not continue for a night in the honour of his original state; and some of them have supported the conclusion by arguments of the most ridiculous nature. It is quite sufficient to remark, that the view which they have taken of the verse is perfectly unnatural, and would have occurred only to an interpreter who was in search of proofs to support a favourite opinion. It contains obviously a general reflection upon the transitory nature of fallen man, and the instability of his enjoyments. His wealth and glory vanish like a vapour; and he himself, after a short interval, returns to the dust from which he came. We have no reason to think that the period of human innocence was of long duration; but we have also no reason to believe that it lasted only for a few hours. Was there not one day of purity and peace? Was the work of the Almighty marred as soon as it was finished? The narrative of Moses seems to be inconsistent with this supposition. The business of the sixth day was so various as to occupy, we should think, the whole of it. First, quadrupeds and reptiles were created; next Adam was made; then the command was given respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; afterwards the various animals passed before him, and he gave them names; again he was cast into a deep sleep, and Eve was formed of a rib taken from his side; last of all, the woman was brought to him, and they were joined together by God himself in the conjugal relation. This was the busiest day of the six, but it were still more crowded with events, if the fall took place upon it; for then we must suppose that Adam and Eve, who had so lately met, separated almost immediately, although for what reason it is impossible to conceive; that Eve had a conversation with the serpent, by whom she was persuaded to

* Ps. xlix. 12.

eat the forbidden fruit ; that she then went in search of her husband, and prevailed upon him to imitate her example ; that they then discovered themselves to be naked, and clothed themselves with fig-leaves ; and that all this happened before the cool of the day, probably the afternoon, when the sun was declining, and the air was refreshed by a gentle breeze. We must add to these transactions the procedure of God as a judge towards them and their tempter, and their expulsion from Paradise. This simple detail of facts is sufficient to shew, that the opinion under consideration is destitute of the slightest probability : but I go a step farther, and say that it is manifestly false ; for at the end of the sixth day God saw all his work that it was good. But how could this be, if sin had introduced misery and death into our world ; if man had become a rebel, and a curse had been pronounced upon him, and upon the earth for his sake ? It is evident from the narrative of Moses, that the temptation and fall of man were subsequent to the seventh day, on which God rested from all his work which he had made.

God pronounced his work to be good, because sin had not entered to mar its beauty, and disturb its order. The heavens were resplendent with the glory of their Maker, and the earth was full of his praise. The trees and herbs of the field displayed his wisdom and goodness ; the inferior animals were perfect in their kind ; and man, placed at their head, was enlightened by reason, and adorned with every moral excellence. There never was so lovely a sight as our world bearing the recent impress of the hand which fashioned it. The memory of its original state, conveyed down by tradition, suggested to the heathen poets their descriptions of the golden age, when the earth spontaneously yielded its fruits, the manners of its inhabitants were simple and virtuous, and life flowed on smoothly in innocence and peace. The whole creation declared the glory of God ; and man, as the priest of nature, gave a voice to its silent homage, and offered up to the Universal Parent, the pure sacrifices of adoration and thanksgiving.

LECTURE XLI.

ON PROVIDENCE.

DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.—A PROVIDENCE INFERRED FROM THE ACKNOWLEDGED PERFECTIONS OF GOD ; FROM THE DEPENDENT NATURE OF CREATURES ; FROM THE ORDER MAINTAINED IN THE UNIVERSE ; FROM THE EXISTENCE OF MORAL SENTIMENTS ; AND FROM VARIOUS FACTS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR RACE.—PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

WHATEVER elevated conceptions the wiser and more contemplative heathen philosophers might entertain of the Deity, they could not rise to that sublime view of him which is exhibited in revelation. They might conceive of him as One, Invisible, and Perfect ; but, not knowing him in the proper character of Creator, they could not feel all that reverence for him which his power in the production of the universe is calculated to inspire, nor those emotions of love and gratitude which are awakened by the display of his creative benevolence. Some of them, indeed, did speak of him, as the Artificer of all things ; but it should be recollected that, according to their undisputed maxim of the impossibility of creation in the proper sense of the term, his office was limited to the arrangement of pre-existing materials ; and that over matter, which was eternal as himself, he had not absolute control, but was under the necessity of executing his designs only so far as its nature would permit. How different is the God of Jews and Christians, who, subsisting alone from infinite ages, manifested himself in the beginning of time, by calling out of nothing that immense and glorious system, which fills the regions of

space ! Of the work of creation we have already spoken, and have illustrated the Mosaic account of it, and endeavoured to vindicate it from the objections of infidelity and of modern science, whether they seek to prove, that there is no vestige of a beginning, and no prospect of an end, or that its origin must be traced to a period far beyond the limits of history, and anterior by thousands or millions of years to the date assigned to it in the Scriptures.

We have seen that, at the command of the Almighty, the material system arose out of nothing ; and by subsequent exertions of his power, under the direction of his wisdom, was arranged in that order which astonishes us by its magnificence, and delights us by its beauty. Whatever speculations we may indulge respecting the other parts of creation, which are too remote to be subjects of minute observation, we know that the earth was not intended to be a solitude. While the land, the sea, and the atmosphere, were filled with living creatures of various kinds, man was formed to be the spectator of the wonders with which he was surrounded, and to proclaim the glory of God, which they could only passively display. Distinguished from them all by his erect posture, and the gift of reason, he was still more highly elevated by his moral endowments, which, being a transcript of the divine excellencies, properly constituted the image of God, with which he was adorned. But this state of things was of short duration. Sin finding admission even into paradise, the sacred seat of innocence and bliss, caused a sudden and melancholy change ; and while man was divested of the glory of his nature, his offended Creator was provoked on his account to blast the earth with his curse ; so that, though still lovely, it is but the faded image of what it once was, and the marks of heaven's anger may be traced in the ruggedness, and sterility, and unhealthiness of many parts of it, as well as in the turbulence and desolating fury of the elements. This revolution, which seemed to defeat the design of God in creation, could not have taken place without his knowledge, nor without his permission ; for there is no doubt that, as he could have prevented our first parents from being tempted, so he could have enabled them to resist the strongest temptations. Mysterious as the

subject is, we must believe that, although we cannot say that God willed sin, he willed not to hinder it, and that it was his purpose to overrule it for an end worthy of himself. It follows, that his Providence was concerned in the fall; although we may not be able to describe the nature and extent of its agency. Before, therefore, I proceed to a particular consideration of the fall and its consequences, I shall endeavour, in some lectures, to explain the doctrine of Providence.

It may be remarked in the commencement, that men have not been more generally agreed in the belief that there is a God, than in the persuasion that the universe is under the direction and control of superior power and wisdom. In this sentiment, I may say, all nations have concurred. It seems to be a natural deduction of reason from the idea of a Deity; and to be suggested to a reflecting mind by the appearances of nature, and the course of events. Certain philosophers, indeed, have denied that the affairs of mortals are under the Divine superintendence; and of these some have doubted or denied the existence of a God; while others, granting it in words, have with manifest inconsistency cut off all intercourse between him and his creatures, and shut him up, as it were, in the solitude of heaven. To this latter class belonged Epicurus, and his followers, who were Atheists in reality, although Theists in profession: *Re tollit*, says Cicero of Epicurus, *oratione relinquit, Deos*.^{*} The Divine nature, according to the Epicureans, as the philosopher Sallustius observes in his book *de Diis et Mundo*, “is neither itself disturbed, nor does it give disturbance to others.” The same opinion is ascribed to them in Cicero’s first book *de Natura Deorum*: “That which is happy and eternal gives no trouble either to itself or to others, and is susceptible neither of anger nor of favour, because whatever is subject to such emotions, is weak.” Happiness, as they imagined, consisted in doing nothing, in being engaged in no occupation, in performing no work; and their God rejoiced in his own wisdom and virtue, and in the assurance of always enjoying the greatest delights. The God of other philosophers, whose task was to govern the world, maintain the courses of the stars, the changes of the

^{*} De Nat. Deor. lib. i.

seasons, the order and revolutions of the universe, to contemplate the lands and seas, support the life and supply the wants of men; this God appeared to them to be necessarily unhappy, because he was involved in irksome and laborious operations. Thus they denied a Providence, and by doing so, as the wiser heathens remarked, subverted the foundations of religion. "If God is such," says Cicero, "that he feels no good will or love towards men, away with him! for why should I say, Let him be propitious? He can be propitious to no person, since, as you say, favour and love are proofs of imbecillity."*

The word Providence, which we have derived from the Latin word *Providentia*, and the Greek word *Προνοια*, are used to express the action or conduct of God towards the universe, which he upholds by his power, and regulates by his wisdom. The question concerning Providence is whether, as there was a Creator, there is also a Ruler of the world; or whether the heavens and earth are under the superintendence of him who brought them into existence. Providence, is the care which God takes of all things, to uphold them in being, and to direct them to the ends which he has determined to accomplish by them, so that nothing takes place in which he is not concerned in a manner worthy of his infinite perfections, and which is not in unison with the counsel of his will. More particularly we may observe, that two things are included in the notion of Providence; the preservation and the government of all things. Preservation immediately respects things themselves, which by his power are sustained, or continued in existence. Government respects their actions and motions, which by his almighty influence are disposed in a certain order, and are rendered subservient to certain ends. In particular, the objects of Providence, as exercised in this world, are men, whose proceedings, partaking as they do of a moral character, are in themselves of so much importance; and whose thoughts, and volitions, and operations, are the means by which the Supreme Ruler carries on his designs.

The first argument which I shall produce in proof of a Providence, is drawn from the acknowledged perfections of God. As these prove that he is qualified to undertake the

* Ibid.

management of his creatures, and all their affairs, so they furnish sure ground for the conclusion, that he has not, and will not, dismiss them from his care. Manifold as his works are, they are all under his eye, for omniscience is an attribute of his nature; and consequently, the minutest objects are as well known to him as the greatest, and the most secret actions as well as those which are performed in the light of the sun. And, although a finite understanding would be perplexed and burdened by the countless myriads of creatures, it costs him no labour to attend to them, for he surveys the immense field of creation at a glance. His power is adequate to all the purposes of his government, whether natural or moral, because it is as unlimited as his knowledge; and it can be exerted upon any object wherever it is situated, or upon ten thousand objects at the same moment, because his power, if I may speak so, is commensurate with his essence, and he is equally present in every part of the universe. He who called it into existence by his simple command, is able to uphold it by the word of his power. Of the sufficiency of his wisdom for the regulation of affairs, no doubt can be entertained, after what has been said of his knowledge. Knowledge furnishes the materials which wisdom arranges. And can he, to whom all the component parts of the universe are perfectly known, and who is intimately acquainted with their situations, their powers, and their uses, be at any loss to adjust them to one another, and to dispose them in such a manner as to accomplish those ends which will promote his glory, and the general good? I may ask again, would it have been worthy of his wisdom, to have created an immense system of material and immaterial beings, and then to have left it to itself? In this case, we could not conceive what purpose he had in view, or by what motive he was influenced in the production of it. Why did he fill the regions of space with innumerable worlds, and people them with various orders of inhabitants, and then withdraw his attention from them, or look on an unconcerned spectator of their movements and actions? But another argument may be drawn from his goodness, which was conspicuous in creation itself, but would seem to have been exhausted by this effort, if a Providence be denied. The bene-

volence which prompted the Deity to call the universe into existence, would surely prompt him to extend his protection to it. There could not be a higher impeachment of his character, than to suppose him to have abandoned his own works; to have deserted his rational offspring, and to have delivered them up as helpless orphans to chance, or to the blind operation of general laws; to the dubious guidance of their feeble reason, and to the arbitrary rule of their wayward passions. What a revolting idea do they give us of the First and Greatest of all beings, who would persuade us that he is indifferent to countless myriads of creatures, whom he himself formed with desires and a capacity for happiness, but who are now the sport of accident, and tossed up and down for no determinate end, like atoms in a sun-beam? How much more amiable and august is the Deity, whom reason and revelation exhibit as the Parent and Guardian of all that live, as caring for the meanest of them, and scattering his gifts among them with a munificent hand! Lastly, as justice is one of his perfections, it follows that he must exercise a moral government over his creatures. Their actions cannot be indifferent to him; nor can he permit them to go on without interfering to restrain or to encourage, to reward or to punish, in such a degree as is consistent with the present, which is not our final, state; to defeat, in some instances, the purposes of the wicked; to prevent the full execution of them in others; and, in all, to overrule them so as to promote the ultimate end of his administration, the triumph and establishment of righteousness. The denial of a Providence, indeed, is so manifestly inconsistent with the belief that God is good and just, that the Epicureans, as we have seen, laid it down as an indisputable maxim, that the Divine nature is susceptible neither of favour nor of anger. There is no moral principle in that being who is not inclined to interpose, and does not actually interpose when he can, to patronize virtue, and to check the progress of vice.

A second argument in favour of Providence, is founded on the dependent nature of creatures. We affirm that they not only derived their being from God, but that it is solely by his power that they are sustained; and consequently, that the continued existence of the universe, and the motions which

are going on in it, whether mechanical or voluntary, are proofs of a Providence. Nothing can be stronger, and more exclusive of the idea of independence on the part of creatures, than the following words of Scripture: "In him we live, and move, and have our being;"* and of the same import is the declaration of an Apostle, that our Saviour, who is God, "upholds all things by the word of his power."† The assertion of Divines, that the preservation of existence is a continual creation, is not merely a rhetorical figure, importing that the power of God is as truly admirable in preserving all things as in creating them, but is a literal statement of a fact. God alone exists by necessity of nature, or, in other words, has the ground of his existence in himself; the existence of all other beings is contingent. It is the result of an act of his will; and as it might not have been, so it may cease to be, there being nothing in the nature of things to ensure its continuance. Thus they touch upon nothing on all sides, upon the nothing which preceded, and the nothing which may follow. As the ground of their existence is not in themselves, it is evident that they cannot, by their own will and power, prolong it for a single moment; and consequently, that it depends upon the will and power of God, as the flowing of the stream depends upon an uninterrupted supply of water from the fountain. They exist by the immediate concurrence of his power, which prevents them from returning to nothing, from which they came, and to which they are always near; for, as the universe was created in a moment, in a moment it might be annihilated. The expression formerly quoted, that God upholds all things by the word of his power, is worthy of particular attention, and will enable us to form a just idea of the subject at present under consideration; for, as there is no need of a positive exertion to make a thing, which we bear up in our hand, fall to the ground, but it is sufficient to permit it to fall, by no longer supporting it, so, God has only (so to speak) to withdraw his hand, and the whole system of created things would instantly perish. It was his will which made, and it is his will which sustains them.—It is certain, and evident to reason, that any given moment in the succession of

* Acts xvii. 28.

† Heb. i. 3.

time does not depend upon any other moment ; for time is not like a line composed of one continuous substance, but like a line formed by placing a number of separate parts one after another. Now all created beings exist in time, that is, their existence is measured by moments. If, then, one moment has an existence independent of that of another ; if the first moment is independent of the second, the second of the third, and the third of those which succeed, it follows, that the existence of any created being in one moment does not necessarily imply its existence in another, or that, because it exists now, it must exist the next instant. Hence it appears, that the operation of the same cause, to which its present existence is owing, is necessary to its future existence. In other words, it is necessary that the power of God, which gave it being, should uphold it in every stage of its duration. As the same power which brought it out of nothing must be incessantly exerted to prevent it from returning to nothing, there is evidently ground for affirming that the upholding of all things is a continual creation. As, however, this term is commonly applied to their first production, the word preservation, or conservation, is more frequently used.

It has been objected against this view of the absolute dependence of all things upon God, that, while it seems to honour him by giving an exalted idea of his power and dominion, it implies a reflection upon his wisdom, as if he had executed a work so imperfect, as to require his constant interference to prevent it from running into confusion and perishing. Even men can construct works which, when finished, have no farther need of their care. A house will stand although the builder should never see it again ; and a watch, or clock, will point out the hour when it has passed out of the hands of the maker. But it should be considered that, in such cases, men merely give a particular form or arrangement to certain materials which were ready for their use ; they neither make them, nor uphold them in being ; and consequently, there is a wide difference between the office which they perform, and that which we assign to God, when we affirm that his interposition is necessary to preserve his creatures in existence. They merely put matter in a particular

shape and order ; but they could not retain it in that state for a single moment if it had a tendency to annihilation. The durability of their works plainly depends upon some other cause than their own power, because they continue after they have entirely abandoned them. With respect to those works which are intended to perform certain motions, and do perform them without the presence of the artists, as a watch or clock, or any other piece of machinery, let it be farther considered, that the process is not owing to men, in any other sense, than that they have made a proper disposition of the parts. It is the effect of the laws of nature, which experience has enabled them to apply to a particular purpose. The moving power is not in the machine itself, but in the elasticity of a spring, or the influence of gravitation, or the expansive force of the atmosphere. To represent, therefore, the works of God as being, on the supposition of the constant care of providence, more imperfect than the works of man, serves only to betray our ignorance. "The full answer to this objection," says Dr Price, "is, that to every machine or perpetual movement for answering any particular purpose, there always belongs some *first mover*, some *weight* or *spring*, or other power, which is continually acting upon it, and from which all its motions are derived ; nor without such a power is it possible to conceive of any such machine. The machine of the universe, then, like all besides analogous to it, of which we have any idea, must have a *first mover*.—It follows, therefore, that this objection is so far from being of any force, that it leads us to the very conclusion which it is brought to overthrow. The excellence of a machine by no means depends upon its going properly *of itself*, for this is impossible, but in the skill with which its various parts are adjusted to one another, and all its different effects are derived from the *constant action* of some *power*" * which is not in the machine.

A third argument in favour of Providence, is founded on the order which is maintained in the universe. It is composed of many parts, endowed with different qualities, in some instances contrary to, and destructive of each other ; but they are all retained in their proper places, and perform their peculiar

* Price's Dissertation on Providence, sect. ii.

functions ; and a harmony is established among them, the result of which is the general good. In this immense and complicated machine, no part ever goes wrong : the motion is never suspended or embarrassed ; its operations are carried on with such regularity, that they are the subject of calculation, and the same effects are constantly produced. The revolutions of the heavenly bodies are performed in their appointed times, notwithstanding the boundless regions which their orbits embrace ; and although some of them go their rounds in eccentric paths, which cross those of other revolving bodies, they never meet, or drive one another from their course. No comet has ever rushed into the sun, or infringed upon a planet, or produced any other effect, than to excite the curiosity and astonishment of men of science, and to terrify the ignorant with direful forebodings of disastrous changes. The sun, the source of light and heat, although he has ministered to the system of which he is the centre, for thousands of years, has lost no portion of his splendour and his influence. It is only in the descriptions of poetry that he grows dim with years. The seasons succeed each other in the order which they have observed since the beginning of time ; the earth retains its productive powers at the close of many generations, who have been supported by its produce ; the sea continues within its ancient boundaries, and leaves the dry land to be the abode of terrestrial animals. The various classes of animals and vegetables, notwithstanding the ravages of disease, of violence, and of inclement seasons, have propagated themselves ; so that the earth is still stocked with inhabitants, and with ample provision for their wants. Shall we not infer that there is a superintending Deity by whom this order is maintained ? If we saw a house in which every thing was found in its proper place, every office was regularly performed, and every thing was provided which was wanted for the accommodation and comfort of the family ; we should conclude that it was under the direction and command of a wise, active, and vigilant master. If we saw a state in which just and beneficial laws were established, every order of the citizens was secure in the possession of its peculiar privileges, all the arts of life were cultivated, and wealth and happiness abounded ; we should

immediately conclude that it enjoyed a regular government, and that those, by whom it was administered, were worthy of their high office. These examples were brought forward by heathen writers, in support of the doctrine of Providence, and furnish an analogy from which it may be fairly deduced. When we contemplate this immense system, so wonderful in its contrivances, so constant in its movements, so admirably balanced, and proceeding from age to age without the slightest confusion ; can it be imagined by any man in his senses, that there is no presiding mind by which it is governed ? The evidence is still stronger to those who are more intimately acquainted with nature, and know that, in the motions of some of the heavenly bodies, there are occasional apparent irregularities, but that means are provided for correcting them, so that they return to their proper place.

It may be objected, that the order which prevails throughout the universe, may be accounted for by the laws of nature, without an immediate interposition of the Deity, and proves only the wisdom of its original constitution. But as, before we attempt to remove an objection, it is necessary to understand it, I ask, what is meant by the laws of nature ? It is not enough to remind me of the law of gravitation, the laws of motion, the laws of light, and other laws mentioned by philosophers ; because, after the most complete enumeration of them, the difficulty remains, what is the meaning of a *law*, in the present application of the term ? I am disposed to think that, in using it, many impose upon themselves, as well as upon others. In its primary signification, it is a rule established and enforced by authority, and obviously implies intelligence and power ; but, when it is transferred to inanimate things, there is a change of the sense. It then signifies merely the stated, regular order in which they are found to subsist. Thus, finding that bodies near or on the surface of the earth tend towards its centre, and the planets belonging to our system tend towards the sun, we call this the law of gravitation ; and in like manner, we speak of other laws by which matter is governed. But the truth is, that these are only facts, and are called laws solely on account of their uniformity. After all our observation and experience, we have merely discovered

the fact, that bodies gravitate to a centre, and that the rays of light are subject to refraction and reflection ; but we have not advanced a single step in explaining the phenomena of nature, or in shewing what is the true cause by which it is moved and sustained. Do we suppose that nature possesses intelligence, or activity, or power of any kind ? Let us not confound ourselves by words, and forget that inertness, or a total incapacity of exertion, is an acknowledged property of matter. It is confessedly inactive. It can neither put itself in motion, nor stop itself when in motion ; and every modification which it undergoes, is the effect of some external power. What then are the laws of nature ? They are the particular modes in which the Deity exerts his power, which, being uniform, are accounted natural, while any deviation from them is pronounced to be miraculous. If this be a just description of them, (and it is ignorance, or philosophy falsely so called, which gives any other,) it follows, that they are so far from accounting for the order which is maintained in the universe, that they necessarily imply the actual and constant interposition of the Creator, and as irresistibly suggest the idea of a Lawgiver, as do the laws of any human society. The truth is, that the laws of nature, if understood to be different from the operation of the Deity, are a name and nothing more, with which simpletons may be amused ; but certainly no man of common sense, who is inquiring into the cause of the stability of the universe, will deem it satisfactory to be answered with a sound. “ The philosopher,” says that great man, Maclaurin, “ who overlooks the traces of an all-governing Deity in nature, contenting himself with the appearances of the material universe only, and the mechanical laws of motion, neglects what is most excellent ; and prefers what is imperfect to what is supremely perfect, finitude to infinity, what is narrow and weak to what is unlimited and almighty, and what is perishing to what endures for ever.” “ Sir Isaac Newton,” he adds, “ thought it most unaccountable to exclude the Deity *only* out of the universe. It appeared to him much more just and reasonable to suppose that the whole chain of causes, or the several series of them, should centre in him as their source ;

and the whole system appear depending on him, the only independent cause.”*

A fourth argument in favour of Providence, arises from a variety of facts in the history of mankind. I take notice, in the first place, of those moral sentiments and feelings which exist in the mind of every human being, who has received any degree of cultivation. “The Gentiles, who have not the law,” says an Apostle, “are a law to themselves, and shew the works of the law written in their hearts.”† In whatever way men acquire notions of morality, there is a principle within them which distinguishes, not only between truth and falsehood, but also between right and wrong; and hence arises that train of feelings, of which we are all conscious, and which are the sources of pleasure or pain, of peace or disquiet. Although the language is figurative, yet there is a manifest propriety in calling conscience the deputy or vicergerent of God in the soul. If it is natural to men, as we may infer from its universality, it was planted in the human breast by the hand of God; and its proper office is to remind us, not only of his existence, but of his government; to recognize him as presiding over our affairs, and taking notice of our actions; to re-echo his voice; to pronounce, in his name, a sentence of approbation or disapprobation; and to summon us to his tribunal, where the sentence will be ratified. If there were no Providence, conscience would be an illusive faculty; its decisions would have no better foundation than the hopes and terrors of superstition; but, if it be an original principle of our nature, it bears testimony to the moral administration of our Maker, and presupposes a supreme law, the commands and sanctions of which it proclaims and inculcates. There would be no place for the operations of conscience under such a deity as Epicurus fancied, who took no concern in our world, and regarded all its affairs with indifference.

While speaking of the moral sentiments and feelings with which mankind are inspired, I am led to point out another proof of the doctrine of Providence, arising from the fact, that we find, by experience, that we are actually at present under a

* Account of Sir Isaac Newton’s Discoveries, Book iv. chap. ix. sect. 1. and 5.

† Rom. ii. 14, 15.

government which dispenses rewards and punishments in a natural way. Thus we find that vicious actions are immediately, or at least speedily, punished, by involving the guilty in disgrace, by reducing them to poverty, by subjecting them to bodily diseases as well as to mental suffering, and by bringing them to an untimely end. On the other hand, we find that virtuous actions are not only the source of inward peace and satisfaction, but lead to respect, to success in business, to health and long life, to a more equable and regular, and consequently a greater, degree of enjoyment than is derived from the unbounded, and consequently short-lived, indulgences of intemperance. All this, it may be said, is the consequence of the constitution and course of nature; but, as these words mean nothing, unless they signify the order which God has established and upholds by his power, all this proves, that, as he is the Creator, so he is the Governor of his intelligent offspring.

The experience of individuals furnishes proofs of a Providence. Where is the man to whom events have not occurred which have led him irresistibly to acknowledge the hand of God? He has seen it in the wonderful turns in the course of his affairs, in his successes and disappointments, in his escapes from danger, in the sudden thoughts and unaccountable suggestions which have sometimes led to most important results. If he has been an attentive observer, he must have seen it also in the circumstances of others around him. It is displayed before the eyes of all men upon the great theatre of the world, where scenes are acted which extort, even from the thoughtless, occasional expressions of devotion. The rise of mighty kingdoms, from small beginnings to extensive and uncontrolled dominion, and their subsequent fall into decay and dissolution, may be accounted for by the operation of second causes, but are often accompanied with circumstances, which point to Him who lifts one up and casts another down. This is particularly the case of the revolutions of the great monarchies of ancient times, when viewed in connexion with the prophecies concerning them; for who can doubt that they were accomplished by Him who foretold them ages before they took place, and while those monarchies had not even

been founded? And when we see order rising out of confusion, and disastrous events producing good, like the tempest which purifies the atmosphere, that man must have a dull understanding, or a hard heart, who feels no emotion of reverence and gratitude towards the great Being whose mysterious wisdom and unbounded beneficence presides over the affairs of mortals.

An additional proof of a Providence is derived from the judgments which are occasionally executed upon notorious transgressors. There is, indeed, a danger of presumptuously explaining events, by hastily concluding, as did the friends of Job, that he is a great sinner who suffers singular calamities. A little sober reflection, and particularly a reverent attention to Scripture, will be an effectual guard against such an abuse. It is certain that, in general, “no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them;” * and, consequently, that we ought not to be judge of the virtue or the vice of individuals by their external circumstances. But our caution must not be carried so far as to benumb our understandings. The fall of tyrants, the tragical fate of persecutors, the punishment of blasphemers while the language of impiety is issuing from their lips, the discovery of crimes which had long eluded the search of every human eye, the manifest retribution which takes place when the cup which the sinner had administered to others is forced to his own lips; these, and similar events, can be viewed by a reflecting mind in no other light than as evidences, that “verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.” † “The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes.” ‡

Before I conclude, I shall mention two facts in the history of our species, which are well worthy of attention. The first is the proportion between the sexes, which are so well balanced, that, if there be any difference, it is on the side of the males; provision being thus made for the greater waste of them, by war, and the various accidents to which they are exposed by sea and by land. Here, then, is a double proof of Divine wisdom, in taking care, that the number of the two sexes should be nearly equal for the regular continuation of

* Eccl. ix. 1.

† Ps. lviii. 11.

‡ Ps. ix. 16.

the species, and that the small excess, which has been observed, should be in that sex where it was manifestly wanted to keep up the proportion. No inquirer into nature can account for this fact. If any man should be so stupid as to assert, that the production of human beings is the effect of the mechanism of the bodies of their parents, he surely will not advance so far in absurdity as to maintain, that it is owing to mechanism that in one age or country they are not all born males, and in another females; and that, whatever may take place in particular families, the result is always what we have already stated. It is impossible to evade this evidence, that the affairs of the world are still under the direction of Him who made it.

The other fact to which I referred, is the variety in the human countenance. Its features are few, but they are so wonderfully altered and combined, that, in a million of men, you shall not find two who are exactly alike. The advantages which result from this diversity are great, but are not always attended to. If the faces of all men were alike, or if instances of this kind were frequent, much inconvenience and confusion would ensue. Impositions would be daily practised; opportunities would be afforded of prying into the secrets of others, of entering into their houses, of assaulting them when they have no suspicion, of committing innumerable crimes with facility, and of eluding discovery. How does it happen that, although all men resemble one another in the general configuration of their faces, they are, at the same time, so different? How does it happen that this dissimilarity is observed even among those who are descended from the same common parents? No reason, I presume, can be assigned but the will and power of God, who, in this as in every other instance, has provided for the safe and comfortable intercourse of mankind.

The arguments, which I have brought forward, are sufficient to establish our minds in the belief of the doctrine of Providence, which was acknowledged by the wiser Heathens, and is explicitly and fully taught in the Scriptures. By Providence, I do not mean merely a general superintendence of the affairs of the Universe, but a particular care exercised to-

wards every constituent part of it. Some maintain only a general Providence, which consists in upholding certain general laws, and exclaim against the idea of a particular Providence, which takes a concern in individuals and their affairs. It is strange that the latter opinion should be adopted by any person who professes to bow to the authority of Scripture—which declares that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father, and that the hairs of our head are all numbered—or by any man who has calmly listened to the dictates of reason. If God has certain designs to accomplish with respect to, or by means of, his intelligent creatures, I should wish to know how his intention can be fulfilled without particular attention to their circumstances, their movements, and all the events of their life? I confess, that I do not distinctly understand what is meant by a general, to the exclusion of a particular, Providence. If it mean, that God takes care of the world, but not of particular things in the world, of the human race, but not of individual men, I am not surprised that I do not understand it, because it is absolutely unintelligible. How can a whole be taken care of without taking care of its parts; or a species be preserved if the individuals are neglected? “We cannot conceive of any reasons that can influence the Deity to exercise any providence over the world, which are not likewise reasons for extending it to all that happens in the world. As far as it is confined to generals, or overlooks any individual, or any event, it is incomplete, and therefore unsuitable to the idea of a perfect Being.” *

It is urged as a formidable objection against a particular Providence, that it is inconsistent with the liberty of man, and the general laws which divine wisdom has established. It supposes the occasional suspension of those laws, and such interference with human agency, as is subversive of freedom. But this objection, as Dr Price observes, “shews narrow views. It would, indeed, be impossible, if a man, for example, happens to be under a wall when it is falling, to prevent his being killed, without suspending the law of gravitation; but how easy would it have been, had his death been an event

* Price's Dissert.

proper to be excluded, or which was not consistent with exact order and righteousness in the regulation of events; how easy, I say, in this case, would it have been to hinder him from coming too near the dangerous place, or to occasion his coming sooner or later, by insensibly influencing the train of ideas in his mind, and in numberless other methods, which affect not his liberty. And since this was *easy* to be done, and yet *was* not done, we may assuredly conclude that it was not *right* to be done, and that the event did not happen without the counsel and approbation of Providence. In general, every person, whenever any event, favourable or unfavourable, happens to him, has the greatest reason to own the Divine hand in it; because, it appears, as far as we can judge, that had the Deity so pleased, it might have been prevented by a secret direction of natural causes, and of the thoughts of men, without offering any violence to them. How plainly may we perceive, that if we ourselves had a greater acquaintance with the powers of nature, and nearer access to the minds of men, we could easily over-rule and direct many events not at present in our power, agreeably to our own purposes, without the least infringement of the general laws of the world, or of the liberty of mankind! But how much easier must it be for that Being to do this absolutely and perfectly, to whom all the powers of nature are subject, who sees through all dependencies and connexions, and has constant access to the heart of every man, and can turn it whithersoever he pleases! Where, then, can be the difficulty of believing an invisible hand, an universal and ever attentive Providence, which guides all things agreeably to perfect rectitude and wisdom, at the same time that the general laws of the world are left unviolated, and the liberty of moral agents is preserved?" *

As the doctrine of a particular Providence is agreeable both to Scripture and to reason, so it is recommended by its obvious tendency to promote the piety and the consolation of mankind. To a God who governed the world solely by general laws, we might have looked up with reverence, but not with the confidence, and gratitude, and hope, which arise from the belief, that he superintends its minutest affairs. The thought,

* Dissertation on Providence, sect. i.

that he “compasses our paths, and is acquainted with all our ways;” that he watches our steps, orders all the events in our lot; guides and protects us, and supplies our wants, as it were with his own hand; this thought awakens a train of sentiments and feelings highly favourable to devotion, and sheds a cheering light upon the path of life. We consider him as our guardian and our Father; and reposing upon his care, we are assured that, if we trust in him, no evil shall befall us, and no real blessing shall be withheld. The doctrine of a particular Providence is eagerly embraced, and fondly cherished, by the humble and pious; while a general Providence is espoused and maintained by cold-hearted speculatists, whose science, falsely so called, turns from the Author of nature, to the more congenial contemplation of the operation of mechanical laws, and the play of human passions.

LECTURE XLII.

ON PROVIDENCE.

OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE.—ITS CONCERN IN THE PRESERVATION AND GOVERNMENT OF ALL THINGS ; IN THE LIFE, AND DEATH, AND IN ALL THE ACTIONS OF MAN.—PROVIDENCE THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD ACTIONS.—DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION, HOW FAR PROVIDENCE IS CONCERNED IN SINFUL ACTIONS.—DISTINCTIONS OF THE CALVINISTIC THEOLOGY ON THIS SUBJECT.

In the preceding lecture, I endeavoured to prove that there is a Providence, by several arguments. In giving a definition of it, I remarked, that it signifies in general the Divine care, direction, and control, which may be arranged under two heads, the preservation of his creatures, and the government of them.

First, He preserves his creatures. They are as dependent upon him for the continuance of their being, as life in the branch is upon the juice which flows from the trunk, or the growth of the members of the human body is upon the blood which is propelled from the heart. No idea can be more false than to suppose, that the communication of being renders that, to which it is communicated, independent. What is derived is not self-existent. It is, indeed, perfectly distinct from its Maker, as any other work is from the workman ; but, if I may speak so, he pervades its essence, and upholds it by the word of his power. But enough was said upon this subject, when we were demonstrating the doctrine of Providence, from the dependence of all created things upon the power which produced them.

Secondly, He governs his creatures, that is, he exerts an influence upon them, unseen and unfelt, and by their means produces certain effects; but, as they differ widely in their properties and their functions, the general term will admit of various modifications of its meaning, in its application to particular subjects. He governs the material system according to those laws which account for the order established, and regulate the movements which are continually going on in it. Hence, in figurative language, he is said to command the sun to rise, the stars to shine, and other natural events to take place. It is his hand which keeps the sun in his place, and wheels the planets around him in their orbits; it is his hand which fixes the mountains on their bases, and confines the ocean within its ancient boundaries. And if those laws are, as we have stated, only the regular modes of his agency in the production of effects, it is evident that the exertion of his power upon the material system is immediate. He governs the vegetable tribes by those laws which relate to the formation and generation of the seed, the protrusion of the stalk or stem, the expansion of the leaves and flowers, and the concoction of the fruit. He so governs them, that not only are the different species preserved, but they continue distinct although growing together, with occasional varieties arising from climate, and soil, and cultivation. Wheat never produces rye, nor oats rice; but from age to age any particular seed multiplies itself, so that the husbandman can calculate with certainty, if not upon the quantity, yet upon the nature of the crop. He governs the lower animals by their instincts, which prove a surer guide to them than even reason is to man. Impelled by those instincts, they choose fit habitations, select their proper food, avoid dangers, rear their young, act in appearance at least prospectively—for instance, when they lay in provisions for winter—and often discover a skill which excites our admiration, although a moment's reflection will convince us, that it is not the wisdom of the animal, but of its Maker. The Scripture makes mention of many facts, from which it appears, that they are absolutely under his control. Thus frogs, lice, and flies, were his instruments in punishing the Egyptians; ravens were his ministers to supply the Prophet

Elijah with food; and as, at one time, lions were sent to plague the idolatrous nations, who had taken possession of the vacant seats of the ten tribes, so at another, they were as harmless as lambs, when for his piety towards God, the holy man Daniel had been cast into their den. By their subservience to his will, "beasts, and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl, praise the Lord."

The divine government of men, being more important in itself, and attended with greater difficulties, demands closer attention, and a more extended illustration. I begin with observing, that Providence is concerned in the birth of each individual. God has not only appointed that human beings shall be produced according to a general law, but has further settled the number, and the time and order, in which they shall appear. When a man plants a tree, or drops a seed into the ground, he does not know how much fruit it will yield; but the exact sum of the human race is known to him, who is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Hence, children are promised in the Scriptures as a blessing, and barrenness is mentioned as a reproach and a punishment; to intimate that both were subject to his disposal. We find too, that the birth of certain persons was foretold before they were conceived in the womb; and we may hence infer, that the birth of all other persons is regulated by the counsel and will of the Almighty. And this will be still more evident, if we consider, that every individual is not a solitary unit, but a link in a chain; and consequently that his appearance at a particular time is necessary to continue the series, to preserve the course of events unbroken, and to secure that other individuals, who are to spring from him, shall appear at the proper season to act their part upon the theatre of the world.

Again, Providence is concerned in our death, as well as in our birth. The natural causes of death are various; as old age, accidents, and diseases slow or rapid in their progress. Nothing is more precarious than human life. It has indeed been made the subject of calculation; but the reasoning proceeds upon general principles, and does not admit of a confident application to particular cases. Life is like a vapour which

is dissipated by the wind, or a flower which is chilled by frost, or crushed by the casual tread of the passenger. Yet we cannot doubt, that it is under the direction of Him, without whose knowledge a sparrow does not fall to the ground. Surely it is not by chance that a gift so precious is taken from those upon whom he had bestowed it; that the course of service and trial, through which they are passing, is terminated; that their spirits are dislodged from the habitation which he had assigned to them, and called into his presence, to give an account of the deeds done in the body. The time, the place, and the manner of our death, are appointed. No man can evade his doom. Till the fixed period arrive, he is immortal, to whatever dangers he may be exposed; when it comes, all the precautions of wisdom and the contrivances of art cannot save him. "The days of man are determined, the number of his months is with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth; thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away."* These pious reflections of Job upon the closing scene of life, will appear to be well founded when we reflect that, as the death of every man takes place in consequence of the original sentence pronounced upon us at the fall, it must be considered as inflicted by the hand of our Maker, in the character of a righteous Judge. It is no objection, that some men are said not to live half their days, and others to have their lives prolonged; because the meaning obviously is, that, in the one case, they die sooner than others of the same standing, or sooner than might have been reckoned upon from the strength of their constitution, by the effects of intemperance or by some natural cause; and that, in the other, they survive diseases which threatened to be fatal, and reach a good old age. In both cases the ultimate cause is the will of God, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive.

Providence is concerned in all the events of our life. Man has been said to be the artificer of his own fortune; and the saying is founded upon the influence which his conduct is frequently observed to have upon his temporal condition; but

* Job xiv. 5, 14, 20.

it is more worthy of a Heathen or an Atheist, than of a believer in the Scriptures, which declare, that our lot is ordered by the Lord. We find, indeed, that certain actions are commonly followed by certain consequences; and it is right that it should be so, because we should otherwise be like a ship in the wide ocean without a compass, and should have no motive to act in one way rather than in another. This regularity is so far from invalidating the argument for the divine interference in human affairs, that it confirms it, like the order maintained in the material system. But, in human affairs, order does not prevail with equal steadiness. There are frequent deviations from it, which compel us to acknowledge, somewhat in the same way as miracles do, the controlling power of God. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."* In many cases, industry is frustrated of its reward, and the plans of wisdom prove abortive. Worldly wealth is apportioned according to no fixed law with which we are acquainted, and falls to the share of the weak as well as the worthless, while men of superior talent contend for it in vain. The same remark may be applied to earthly honours; and hence, in the language of worldly men, temporal blessings are called the gifts of fortune, to intimate that in appearance they are distributed blindly, and without any regard to merit. But these things are disposed by the sovereign will of God. "The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all."† "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another."‡

Here I would remark that, although the terms, fortune and chance, are frequently used, they are exceedingly improper, unless they are intended merely to express our ignorance of the causes of events. No rational being, who allows himself to reflect, can suppose that any thing takes place without a cause. As every motion of matter is the effect of impulse, so every action of intelligent creatures is the effect of some motive, or of some previous state of the mind. The turning up of a particular side of a die, is as certainly the result of the laws of nature, as the fall of a heavy body to the earth;

* Eccl. ix. 11.

† Prov. xxii. 2.

‡ Ps. lxxv. 6.

and our most careless and unpremeditated actions are as certainly the consequence of thought and volition, as the proceedings which are founded on mature deliberation. But as we cannot trace the motions of the die, we say that it exhibits a certain number by chance; and to chance we ascribe our own actions, when the thoughts which led to them passed so rapidly and lightly through our mind as to leave no impression behind them. By chance, we went to a particular place; by chance, we met with a particular person. But there was no chance in the case; for, if we could recal the previous train of thought which is irrecoverably gone, we should find, that our going to the place was as natural as the motion of a ship in a given direction, by the force of the tide or of the wind, and that all the consequences are so many links in a chain of causes and effects. Chance, indeed, is impossible under the government of God; unless we should suppose his government to be partial or imperfect, and that there are some events to which its power does not extend. Nothing seems to be more a matter of chance than the decision of a lot; yet the Scripture says, “the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”* An arrow shot at random may fall to the ground, or may kill one man as well as another; but, in the case of Ahab, it had received a commission, and pierced the bosom of the impious and devoted monarch.† If then, we will speak of chance, let us affix to the term an idea consonant to reason and religion, and let it express solely our ignorance of the causes of events.

With regard to the particulars now mentioned, every person will readily assent to them, as soon as they are accurately and clearly stated. A part of the subject which remains, namely, the divine government of the actions of men, is more difficult, because it involves the question respecting the consistency of the agency of the Creator with the liberty of his creatures. The general fact, that he is concerned in their actions, is manifest from their absolute dependence upon him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being; and from many declarations of Scripture. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever

* Prov. xvi. 33.

† 1 Kings xxii. 2 Chron. xviii.

he will;" * and the same thing may surely be said of the subjects of kings.

That his Providence is concerned in the good actions of men, will not be denied. Their goodness may seem to justify his interference; and the assistance which he gives will be deemed worthy of the purity and benevolence of his character. It will be readily acknowledged that he excites men to good actions; that he presents to them proper objects and proper motives; that he strengthens their faculties; that he imparts an agreeable feeling to their minds, while they are engaged in them; that he encourages them to persevere amidst difficulties and obstacles; and that he enables them, in many instances at least, to accomplish what they intend. The Scripture asserts, "that God works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," † and on this ground calls upon us to be thankful and humble. Against the doctrine of efficacious grace, which is plainly taught in this, and in many other passages of Scripture, the common objection is, that it leaves nothing to the human will but a simple concurrence with the motions of grace; and consequently, takes away its power of choosing or refusing, according to its own determination. Without entering into this controversy at present, I observe, that the influence which God is conceived to exert in good actions, is, in some respects, analogous to that which one man exerts upon another, without being suspected of at all intrenching upon his liberty. If one man excite another to a good action; if he lay before him strong inducements to engage in the performance of it; if he strengthen his faculties by culture and exhortation; if he give him every possible assistance, and endeavour to make his duty agreeable to him, we never doubt, when the latter complies, that the action is his own, and that all its merit is imputable to him, although strictly it did not originate with himself, and he perhaps would not have thought of it, unless the former had been his monitor and counsellor. We never dream that he is less free in this, than in any other action which he spontaneously performed, because, in whatever way his consent was obtained, he did consent, and the action was perfectly voluntary. There is no

* Prov. xxi. 1.

† Phil. ii. 13.

difference between the Divine agency upon men, and the agency of one man upon another, except that God is conceived to exert immediately some power upon the minds of his creatures, which one creature cannot exert upon another. Whether this power is any infringement of their liberty, we cannot determine by abstract reasoning, because we are ignorant of its nature and operation. The question must be decided by experience, which assures those who are the subjects of this influence, that they retain perfect freedom of choice, and by Scripture, which declares that God makes them willing in the day of his power. It is certain, that its operation is in strict accordance with the nature of man; that it does not compel, but inclines him; that it takes away nothing which is essential to moral responsibility, because, whenever choice is exercised, a man is accountable. The concern of Providence in good actions will be admitted by all, but those who, carrying their notions of liberty to an extravagant height, would exempt the human mind from the government of God, and constitute man an independent sovereign, who sways the sceptre of his will without control.

The concern of Providence in the sinful actions of creatures cannot be so satisfactorily explained, because it is difficult to ascertain how far the Divine agency may proceed, without having any part in the sinfulness of the action. The followers of Manes or Manicheus solved the difficulty by maintaining, after the ancient Persians, two principles, the one good and the other evil; and some individuals and sects have not hesitated to affirm, that God is the Author of sin. These impious errors we indignantly reject; but while we speak of them with abhorrence, let us beware lest, in attempting to explain the subject before us, we unwittingly fall into them, or say any thing which may imply, that our sins are chargeable upon God.

First, God permits sinful actions: "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts: and they walked in their own counsels." * "In times past, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;" † that is, to practise idolatry, and

* Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12.

† Acts xiv. 16.

to live in those sins with which the heathens were polluted. The permission of sinful actions does not import that he approves of them ; for, as he is infinitely holy, sin must always be the object of his abhorrence ; and accordingly, we find him testifying against the sins into which he permits men to fall, denouncing his threatenings against them, and actually punishing the sinners. Nor is permission to be considered as an inactive sufferance of events to take place, without knowing them beforehand, or without being able to hinder them. Either of these suppositions is unworthy of God ; the one impeaches his omniscience, and the other his omnipotence. As things future are known to him, as well as things present, and as he declares the end from the beginning, so he is able, in many ways, to prevent creatures from acting. He can influence their thoughts and volitions ; he can withhold opportunities ; he can deprive them of ability ; he can place obstacles before them, which it is not possible to surmount. Hence we may perceive what is implied in the permission of sinful actions. God does nothing to prevent them, except that he testifies against them by conscience, and by his word, which is full of dissuasions from sin and of considerations which have a moral tendency to restrain men from committing it. He does not keep them out of the way of temptation ; he does not take away the means of effecting their purposes ; he does not, by any influence upon their minds, repress their desires and inclinations ; he does not represent to them, in a strong and efficacious manner, the wickedness of their conduct, or terrify them with an apprehension of the consequences ; he does not employ other men to oppose them ; he does not, as he could do, change their hearts, and turn them to the love and practice of holiness. It follows that, as they are left to themselves, in circumstances which afford full scope for the exercise of their natural dispositions, the sinful actions which God has permitted do not fail to take place. They are not in the number of contingencies, or of things which may, or may not happen : there is a certainty of the event, without which it could not be the object of the Divine foreknowledge. It has been said, that the permission of sinful actions is so far from being merely an inactive

sufferance of them, that it implies a positive act of his will, in as much as he wills to permit sin for ends worthy of himself. And here this distinction is made, that God does not will sin considered in itself, but the permission of sin, because evil itself cannot be the object of his will, but he must always will what is good. If sin is said to be the means of manifesting the Divine glory, it does not follow that God, who wills the end, must also will the mean considered in itself. Sin is in this case called a mean, not causally or effectively, but materially and objectively, as it furnishes an occasion of glorifying God. It is a mean, not in itself, for its natural tendency is to dishonour him, but by accident, or in consequence of his wisdom, which brings good out of evil. He who wills the end, wills also the means, but not always with the same kind of will; for, if the means are of a different nature from the end, he may will the latter effectively because it is good, but the former only permissively because they are evil; the object of his will being not properly the means themselves, but the use of them. I know not whether you have clearly apprehended this distinction, nor am I sure that it will throw much light upon the subject; but I have mentioned it, because it has been considered as important by some theological writers.

Secondly, He limits sinful actions; for, we are not to suppose that, when he permits men to sin, or leaves them to themselves, he exempts them entirely from his control. Such a supposition would be inconsistent with the dependent condition of creatures, and with the character of God as the Governor of the world. They are at all times under his superintendence, and subject to such restraints as it may seem proper to his wisdom to impose. Were the elements let loose, and suffered to exert all their fury, to mingle and conflict with unbridled rage, the earth would exhibit a scene of confusion and devastation, and the whole human race would be swept away in one general ruin. Similar would be the effect, if the appetites and passions, emancipated from physical and moral restraints, should display all their violence and malignity. If ambition, and avarice, and lust, and cruelty, and oppression, knew no bounds, the earth, where so much peace and comfort

are enjoyed, would be transformed into the image of hell ; with this difference, that its inhabitants, being mortal, would gradually melt away by the calamities which they mutually inflicted, and the race would become finally extinct. The designs of the Almighty could not be carried on without the application of checks and restraints ; they would be embarrassed and defeated by the wayward movements of the wicked, driven hither and thither by the wild and tumultuary fluctuations of their passions. If the revengeful man had always an opportunity to gratify his resentment, how many lives would be lost, the preservation of which is necessary, not only for the comfort and prosperity of families, but for the continuation of the succession in a particular line, and for other important purposes, which the individuals thus preserved are appointed to accomplish ! If despotic power were suffered to gather strength, and to extend its sway according to its lawless wish, the most flourishing regions of the earth would, in the progress of time, be characterized by the same stagnation of the human mind, the same decline of agriculture and the arts, the same degradation and consumption of the human species, which are seen in the fine countries that groan under the iron yoke of the Turkish dominion. Had persecutors been able to carry into full effect their plans of destruction, the church of Christ must have long since existed only on the bloody page which recorded the fate of its martyrs. But Providence opposed various obstacles to the rage of the Heathen emperors in the early ages, and to the still more diabolical procedure of Antichrist and his followers ; so that, although thousands and tens of thousands were the victims of their unhallowed power, a remnant was always saved ; the succession of the friends of truth was secured ; and the prediction of our Saviour was fulfilled, that “ the gates of hell should not prevail ” against his church. * “ The remainder of the wrath of men thou restrainest.” God says to the wicked, as to the waves of the sea, “ Hitherto shall ye come, and no further.” Their strength or courage fails ; difficulties arise which deter them ; or their passions are kept at bay by the opposing passions of others ; or they change their intentions, and of their

* Matth. xvi. 18.

own accord abandon their work before it is finished. Such means are always at the command of Providence; and there is still another way in which it can set bounds to the wickedness of men, by depriving them, through disease or a sudden stroke, of bodily or mental ability, so that they can sin no more; or by cutting them off in the midst of their projects, like Herod the persecutor, who was smitten by an angel, and perished in a miserable manner.

Thirdly, He over-rules sinful actions, so as to accomplish great and good designs by them; and thus he makes the wrath of man praise him. The envy of the sons of Jacob against their brother Joseph, which prompted them to sell him into Egypt, was the occasion of his elevation to the highest authority in that kingdom; in consequence of which he saved alive his father and his family, in a famine which afterwards took place. "As for you," he said to them, "ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."* The reproach and persecution of the ungodly, which cause much disquiet and distress to the people of God, are made the means of exercising and strengthening their graces, and of fitting them more and more for a state of perfection. God "chastens them" in this and in other ways, "that they may be partakers of his holiness;"† and "their afflictions work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."‡ The introduction of sin into the world, which was followed by the fall and all its dreadful consequences, has given rise to the brightest manifestation of the glory of God, and the highest exercise of his benevolence, in the mediation of Christ, and the salvation of the guilty through his blood. But although God turns evil to good, it by no means follows that men may do evil that good may come. His procedure is like that of a skilful physician, who, finding poison in existence, so proportions and mixes it with other ingredients, that it proves medicinal; while they are like the man, who should first make a poison, and then administer it with a rash and presumptuous hand. The natural tendency of sin is only to evil; and under the management of creatures, nothing but

* Gen. i. 20.

† Heb. xii. 10.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

evil will result from it. No man, therefore, should commit sin with a view to good, not only because the mean which he employs is absolutely forbidden, but because it is calculated to produce exactly the reverse of what he professes to aim at. The end is beyond his reach; the process by which good is deduced from evil, can be carried on only by infinite wisdom and almighty power. God finding sin in the world, renders it subservient to the purposes of his moral administration; but this does not justify our first parents, who introduced it, or those who continue to practise it, any more than it would excuse a man who had violated the laws of society, that his crime had somehow contributed, through dextrous management, to promote the public good.

Thus we have seen, that God permits the sinful actions of his creatures; that he limits them; and that he over-rules them. But we are not yet done with this important and mysterious subject. The most difficult part remains,—the physical agency of God in sinful actions. We have endeavoured to shew, that creatures are absolutely dependent upon God, and that, as he upholds them in existence, so it is by his secret influence that they are enabled to exert the faculties with which they are endowed. It seems to follow from this position, that he is the first cause of all their operations; and, consequently, that whether they do good or evil, they cannot act till they are first acted upon by him. Some give this explanation of the matter, that, although God preserves his creatures and their faculties, by the same power which was exerted in creating them, yet he leaves to them the right or wrong use of those faculties, that they may be the proper subjects of praise and blame, reward and punishment; and that thus their sins are imputable to themselves alone. It is owing to Providence that men exist, and are possessed of certain powers; but, that they use them improperly is owing to themselves, since God gave them liberty of will; and therefore their sins are not chargeable upon him. This view of the subject, which is adopted by many modern Divines, is as ancient at least as the days of Origen. God, he says, has made us living creatures, and furnished us with the power of moving our members, our hands and our feet. We ought not, however, to

say, that we have from God the specific motion to strike or kill another, or to take away his property; but only that we have received the general principle of motion, which we use to good or bad purposes, as we please. In like manner, we have received from God the general power of willing and acting, as we are living creatures; but it depends upon ourselves alone to will and to do good or evil.

It is an objection against this opinion, that it is inconsistent with what has been already proved respecting the absolute dependence of all creatures upon the Creator. It asserts, indeed, their dependence upon him for their being and faculties; but it plainly exempts their actions from his control. The matter is explained in a different manner by Calvinistic Divines, who maintain, in common with many of the Schoolmen, a Divine concurrence, by which they mean, not only that God assists his creatures, but also that he excites as well as enables them to act. It is distinguished into *prævius vel prædeterminans*, previous or predetermining, and *simultaneus vel concomitans concursus*, simultaneous or concomitant concurrence. The former is that act of God, by which he influences causes and principles; excites his rational creatures, of whom we are now speaking, moves them to act, and to do one thing rather than another. It is sometimes called *præcursor*, which seems to be a more proper term for expressing the idea than *conkursus*. The latter is the continued influence of the Deity upon them, by which they are enabled to perform the action to which they have been excited; and this continued influence is maintained, to preserve the dependence of creatures upon the First Cause. If, like a ball which, being impelled in a particular direction, moves without receiving any new impulse from the hand, they proceeded to perform the action without his continued agency upon them, the effect could be attributed to God only in part, and remotely, and consequently he would not be its immediate and principal cause. The chief difficulty is in relation to the former *conkursus prædeterminans*; and accordingly, even Calvinists have been divided in their sentiments, some admitting previous concurrence only to good works, and simultaneous concurrence in reference to works of a different character; while others admit previous concurrence in works

of every kind, that the doctrine of Providence may be properly explained.

The difficulty which must here present itself to every person of reflection, is, that this previous concurrence seems to make God the author of sin; for if a rational creature performs a sinful action, and performs it in consequence of a divine influence upon him, by which he was excited to it, the action may be fairly traced back to God as the prime mover, and its guilt must be charged upon him. *Causa causæ est etiam causa causati*; the cause of a cause, say the Schoolmen, is also the cause of its effect. To remove this difficulty, it has been said, that although the divine *præcursor* extends to bad as well as to good actions, it does not make God the author of sin, because the previous concurrence relates to actions considered materially and entitatively, but not morally;—such is the language of the schools;—that is, it relates to the substance of the act, but not to its pravity. It is not new to view an action in two different lights, physically and morally; nor that the same action should have two different causes. The soul, for example, moves the body, by acting, we may presume, upon the brain. If a particular person be lame, his halting gait is not owing to the action of the soul upon the brain, and through the nerves upon the muscles, but to the natural or accidental defect in his limb. If a man play upon a musical instrument, the impulse which he gives to the strings is the cause of the sound, but not of the discord which is produced by their not being properly stretched. If a magistrate orders a criminal to be executed, he is the cause of his death, but not of the malevolence which the man may feel, who is employed in carrying the sentence of the law into effect. It is no objection, that as pravity is necessarily and inseparably annexed to the action, he who is the cause of the action, seems to be the cause of its pravity, because the will of the creature is no otherwise the moral cause of the evil, than as it is the material cause of the action, with which moral evil is necessarily connected. But this statement of the concern of the will in moral evil is false, for the will, as a physical agent, is the physical cause of the action, but as a moral agent, is the cause of its sinfulness, not simply by performing the

action, but by performing such an action as is contrary to the law to which the person is subject. The cause that moral evil is ascribed to a man's will, is not, that as a physical agent it performs a physical action, but that as a moral agent it performs the action forbidden by the law, which the man is bound to obey. The moral evil does not arise from the action considered as a natural action, but from the defect or corruption of the will.

Two things ought to be carefully distinguished, an action and its quality. The action is from God: its quality, if at least it be evil, is from man. To render the point still clearer, Theologians have maintained that actions, abstractly considered, are neither good nor bad, but become such according to circumstances; volitions are mere natural acts of an intelligent being, and are in themselves indifferent; unless we should say that they are good in the metaphysical sense of the term, according to which, goodness is predicated of simple existence, and the modes of existence. In this view, the agency of God in causing volitions and actions subsequent to them, is not more inconsistent with the purity of his nature than his agency in causing the motions and modifications of matter. In both cases something is produced; but as it is invested with no quality, but is considered as a simple existence, it is not the proper object of a moral judgment. I know not how far you have apprehended these distinctions, nor what satisfaction they have communicated to your minds on this intricate and perplexing subject. The design of them is to maintain on the one hand, the dependence of creatures upon their Maker, and, on the other, to vindicate him from the suspicion of being the Author of sin. It is certain that, when discussing this subject, we walk in a very narrow and a very obscure path, and are in constant danger of stepping aside to the right hand or to the left. Whether it be possible to pursue it without deviating, is questionable; and those who have made the trial with the most humility, will be the least disposed to boast of their success.

A little acuteness is sufficient to invent distinctions, by which a difficulty may be evaded, and an opponent may be silenced, if not convinced; but it is not so easy on a subject

so obscure and embarrassed, to give full satisfaction to a dispassionate, inquiring, and reflecting mind. A man may surely be pardoned, or at least not severely censured, if, after having perused the arguments of Scholastic Divines, he should acknowledge himself to be at a loss to understand how God, who is infinitely holy, can by an immediate influence excite rational creatures to actions, which, whatever they may be in themselves, are and must be sinful as performed by them, who are corrupted in all their faculties. He may be excused also, if he should be tempted to think, that a physical act, abstracted from all circumstances, which has been barbarously called the substrate matter of sin, is a metaphysical conceit, an airy nothing without a local habitation. He may be wrong in this opinion; but the subject is so abstruse, and so subtle, that his mistake is entitled to indulgence. An intention to take away life, it is said, is indifferent in itself, and is good or bad according to circumstances. God therefore may excite this intention, without doing any thing impure or unjust. But I would ask, is it a simple intention to take away life, without the specification of an object, which is excited in the mind of a murderer? Does such an abstract intention exist *in rerum natura*? And if it did exist, would it be innocent? A private man can never innocently form the general design to take away life, nor indeed can any man, either private or public. The general intention to take away life is necessarily criminal; it is an intention to do what, abstractly considered, no creature has a right to do; it becomes lawful only when the object is specified, and is in particular circumstances. Here, I presume, is a case, and others might be mentioned, which demonstrates the falsity of the maxim, that actions and volitions are indifferent in themselves, and become good or bad by their circumstances. I should like to hear, from some person who is master of the subject, how God could, without being the author of sin, excite a man to blaspheme his name. Some of the distinctions which would be resorted to on this occasion, may be conceived; but it would be a hard task to digest them.

My design in these observations is, not to controvert the doctrine of Calvinistic Divines, but to convince you, that

this is a subject too high for our faculties. We know, that God is concerned in all the actions of his creatures; that nothing takes place without his permission; that men are dependent upon him, and cannot move, or breathe, or think without his assistance. But the exact limit between the actions of the Creator and the actions of his rational creatures, we cannot define. Let us be content with what we know, and make a practical improvement of it. Let us adore that mighty Being who rules over all. Let us implore his direction and aid; and let us remember that, whatever theories speculative men may adopt, conscience, and Scripture, and reason declare, that we are accountable creatures; and that he who is the constant witness of our conduct, will hereafter sit in judgment upon us, and reward or punish us according to our works.

LECTURE XLIII.

ON PROVIDENCE.

EXAMINATION OF THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE RESPECTING THE AGENCY OF GOD IN SINFUL ACTIONS.—GOD'S PECULIAR OR GRACIOUS PROVIDENCE.—OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE CONSIDERED.

IN the two preceding lectures, I laid before you the proofs of a Providence, and its objects. In general it is the divine government of all created things; but it was obviously proper to consider it chiefly in relation to ourselves. After shewing that its care extends to all the events and circumstances of our life, I entered more fully into the inquiry, how far it is concerned in human actions. With respect to good actions, there can be no hesitation in admitting, that it both assists and excites us; but there is great difficulty in settling the extent of its influence in respect to such as are sinful. I stated to you the opinion of Calvinistic divines on this intricate subject, and pointed out the distinctions, by which they endeavoured to prove, that, while God excites to actions which are sinful, and assists in the performance of them, he is not the author of sin. Objections, as I hinted, may be brought against those distinctions; but they have been deemed satisfactory by many persons of judgment and learning, or at least they have been proposed as the best which occurred to them, and as furnishing the only solution of the difficulty.

Let us not be surprised, that we cannot throw such light

upon this and many other points, as shall dispel every shade of obscurity. Perfect knowledge is not given to man, the range of whose faculties is very confined, and who often encounters moral as well as physical impediments in the investigation of truth. It seems to have been the will of his Creator, that he should be furnished with as much knowledge as should suffice to direct him in the path of duty, and in the way to eternal life ; but not with the means of gratifying his curiosity, and disclosing all the arcana of the universe. But he is not content with this (as he is apt to think) scanty allotment. The desire which led to so fatal an issue in the case of our first parents, is still prevalent, and operates with great power on their descendants—the desire “to be as Gods, knowing good and evil.” There is no subject which we do not wish to comprehend, and we are unhappy and restless, as long as there is any one thing in nature or in grace, which we are unable to explain. There is no doubt that, in many instances, this impatience has led not a few persons to push their speculations too far, forgetting their incompetence, and ceasing to regard with becoming reverence the sacred barriers which the will of God has opposed to their progress.

There are two ways in which we may go wrong ; we may assume false principles as the foundation of our argument, and we may reason unfairly from true principles. In the present case, the ground on which we proceed seems to be good—that, as creatures are absolutely dependent upon God, they cannot think, and will, and move, without him ; but, as we are unable to define with exactness the mode and degree of his operations upon them, we are not sure of all the consequences which we may draw from the principle. There is a danger of ascribing too much or too little to creatures ; of representing them, on the one hand, as independent of God, and sovereign lords of their actions, or, on the other, of turning them into machines, which have as little concern in their own movements as a clock or a steam engine, and consequently of laying all the responsibility upon God. None of us will pretend to tell how God acts upon inanimate matter, so as to move it according to the laws of gravitation and attraction ; and none of us should pretend to tell how he acts

upon spiritual beings. It would be wise to confess our ignorance, and to rest in the general acknowledgment that he is the First Cause, without entering into a minute explanation.

I now proceed to consider some passages of Scripture, in which the agency of God in sinful actions is mentioned.

I begin with an expression which is used on several occasions, particularly by the Apostle Paul, who says concerning the vessels of wrath, that "whom he will, God hardeneth;"* and by Moses, who informs us more than once, "that the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh." There is something awful and startling in these words, and they seem to import an agency on the part of God, which is at variance with his acknowledged holiness, and justice, and goodness. With respect to Pharaoh, we may remark, that the command to let the Israelites go, was one with which he could not be supposed to be ready to comply, because it interfered with the sovereign authority which he claimed in his own dominions, would deprive him of a great proportion of his subjects, whose labours were profitable to the state, and was delivered by Moses, a man whom he did not know, in the name of JEHOVAH, whom he did not acknowledge as God; that when the commission of Moses was confirmed by miracles, they were at first such as were imitated by the Egyptian magicians, and therefore seemed to indicate no superior power, to which he was bound to submit, or of which he had reason to be afraid; that when other miracles were wrought which exceeded the power of the magicians, their effects were soon removed, so that Pharaoh would think that the danger was past, and probably flatter himself that each judgment would be the last; that when he gave his consent that the people should go into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God, Moses rejected the grant, unless they were permitted to take their flocks and herds along with them; that the destruction of the first-born, by which he was compelled to yield, must have left a strong feeling of resentment and revenge in his bosom; and, finally, that the situation of the Israelites, who were entangled in the wilderness, having the sea in front, and the mountains on either hand, appeared to present a favourable

* Rom. ix. 18.

opportunity of punishing them for all the calamities which they had brought upon his country, and of retaining them under his yoke. All these events were ordered by the Providence of God; but, in not one of them did he exert any direct or immediate influence upon the mind of Pharaoh, either to infuse wickedness into it, or to confirm his proud and rebellious disposition. Hence it is plain, that when God is said to have hardened his heart, the expression must be understood in a qualified sense. He hardened it, not, by any positive act, but by a series of dispensations, from which, being previously corrupt, it took occasion to persist in disobeying his commands. God placed him in certain circumstances, and left him to act according to his natural inclinations.

In a similar manner we must explain the expression when it is used concerning other sinners. God does not create wicked dispositions in their hearts, but he does not restrain, by his Providence or his grace, those which already exist. He does not keep them out of the way of temptation; but, as they go on heedlessly, he permits them to encounter and to fall over stumbling-blocks. He does not hinder Satan, and other men like themselves, from laying snares for them, and soliciting them to sin. He withholds his grace, which would have converted them, but which he was under no obligation to communicate; and he even removes the checks which he had put upon them, because they submitted to them with impatience and murmuring, and discovered an eager desire to get rid of them. The consequence is, that their hearts are hardened, that their wickedness increases, and grows into a confirmed habit; but it is evident that the hardening of their hearts is their own work, and is ascribed to God only indirectly. He does not impel them to commit sin, nor would his dispensations of themselves lead them to it; that is, unless there were a previous inclination or tendency to it. He does not prevent them from committing sin; but he cannot on this account be called the author of it, unless it could be proved that he is under an obligation to impart effectual grace to all men, without distinction.

In like manner, we must explain those passages in which

THE McALL MISSION IN FRANCE.
DUNDEE AND DISTRICT AUXILIARY
SABBATH-SCHOOL MISSIONARY LEAFLET
FOR THE SEASON 1882-83.



Yours most sincerely
R. W. McAll

The Medals with which Mr. McALL is decorated were presented by the Paris Society for Promoting Popular Instruction and Education, and by the *Société Nationale d'Encouragement au Bien*. The Medal of the National Society bears that it was presented (in May, 1877) *pour dévouement à l'humanité*; the other Medal, presented later, has a similar inscription.

TO THE
SABBATH SCHOLARS OF DUNDEE AND DISTRICT,
AND THE MEMBERS OF THE
Dundee Boys' and Girls' Religious Association.

PARIS, 10th October, 1882.

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

HAD you been walking beside the river Seine on Thursday, 29th June (the French children's weekly holiday), you would have seen and heard something fitted to remind you of your own country. Such a spectacle is, alas! too rare in France, but we trust it will be often renewed in years to come. Five or six steamers follow each other at short intervals. Each of them holds 250, and all are laden with children and young people. What are these sounds which cause the passers-by on the banks to pause and listen? Children's voices singing tunes well known in Scotland, set to French words. You recognise, for example, "Hold the Fort," "The Lower Lights," and other favourites. Many curious spectators ask "What is this?" Answer—"A *fête* of the schools of the McAll Mission!"

From our twenty-four little mission schools, widely scattered over Paris, we assembled that day our elder scholars, and gave them the extraordinary treat of a river excursion to the beautiful park of St. Cloud, several miles distant. There they engaged for some hours in various pastimes. At the close, after a substantial repast, we gathered them on the lawn for a meeting, when hymns were sung, and addresses delivered by Pastor Theodore Monod, the Rev. C. E. Greig (director of our work among the children), and others. Between 1200 and 1300 were there, besides some hundreds of their teachers and friends. The utmost order prevailed. Even our poorest scholars, coming from the most wretched quarters of the town, and though having only careless and ungodly parents, were exemplary in their behaviour. Some Americans who chanced to be in the park came up, attracted by the sweet singing, and were actually moved to tears on hearing those familiar strains on foreign lips.

During this year, the Good Shepherd has been gathering lambs to His heavenly fold from the ranks of our little communities. Four in one family died of a malignant fever. These were the children of atheistic parents, who made a mockery of religion. In our school they learned the story of redeeming love, and we have reason to hope that they are all "safe in the arms of Jesus."

Only a few days ago another little dying girl, named Julie, was delighted to hear that same sweet hymn (in French) sung to her. She asked a young companion who came to her sick-room, if she loved her. "Yes," was the reply, "and I have another Friend who loves me; do you know Him?" "Jesus—you mean. Oh yes! He is my best friend."

When she knew that she must die, she sent a message to her absent brother. "Tell him that I want him to love Jesus as I have learned to love Him." Her nurse repeated the verse, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Julie smiled and said, "*Que c'est bon; oh merci!*" (How comforting it is; thank you.)

So you see, dear young friends, that the effort in which you have helped us has not been in vain. Could you visit our mission schools you would observe with what care the French children learn their texts and hymns, and how they love their teachers. Many of our elder scholars have become teachers in their turn.

The average weekly attendance at our twenty-four schools in Paris is between 2000 and 3000. We have also about twelve similar ones in various towns of France.

Will you not help us again, and enable us, by your offerings, to extend this effort? One of our stations near Paris seemed to be given us in answer to the prayer of some children who used to live in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and had gone out to reside in a more distant quarter. They longed for a Sunday school like the one they had been obliged to leave; they prayed for it, and God provided it for them in a very remarkable manner. Will not the same gracious Lord, who loves the dear children of France, send a richer blessing upon them in answer to the prayers of their brothers and sisters in Scotland?

You will notice the black border surrounding this leaflet. It tells of the death, at the early age of 32, of one who was greatly loved by a multitude of dear children in Paris, the Rev. George Theophilus Dodds, my valued colleague and fellow-labourer.

Your faithful friend,

R. W. McALL,

*Honorary Director of the Mission to the Working Classes
of Paris and France.*

The McAll Mission is carrying the Gospel of Christ to all parts of France, and everywhere this Gospel is eagerly welcomed. There is now an "open door," and an opportunity to spread the knowledge of the Truth as there never was before in France, and the people come in crowds to listen to the new religion called "the Gospel," the Divine message, to which they have been utter strangers.

The McAll Mission occupies no ecclesiastical position, and has no sectarian basis in its working. The efforts and results go to increase the Protestant Churches already existing. Herein lies, in part, the secret of its success; and because of this, it ought to commend itself to all friends of Christ's cause throughout Scotland.

There is no limit to what can, at this time, be done to reclaim a great and noble nation from infidelity to allegiance to the truth. But this must be done at once or it will be *too late*, for, as has been said by a venerable Glasgow minister, "The fields are not only *ripe*, but almost already *too ripe*."

The Committee trust that Superintendents and Teachers will respond to this appeal, and influence a share of their Sabbath-school collections for this work in France. Contributions should be sent to the Treasurer as soon as possible.

SUMMARY OF THE YEAR'S WORK FOR 1881.

Total number of Stations in France (including 32 in Paris),	65
Meetings held in those Stations, including Children's Services and Sabbath Schools,	8,508
Attendance at these Meetings,	642,023
Bibles, New Testaments, Scripture Portions, and Tracts circulated, about	250,000

DUNDEE AND DISTRICT AUXILIARY.

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God is said to blind the eyes, or the minds of men. What has been already said, is obviously applicable to them; and indeed, although the expressions are different, the subject to which they relate is the same. The same effect is pointed out by the hardening of the heart; the blinding of the eyes; the giving of men over to a reprobate mind; the delivering of them up to their own lusts, to walk in their own counsels. Nothing more is intended, than that God withholds his grace from them, leaves them under the power of corrupt inclinations, and does not prevent them from being exposed to temptation. With respect to the blinding of the mind, it is worthy of attention, that while at one time it is represented as the act of God, it is attributed at another to the agency of Satan. "The god of this world," says Paul, "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." * Now, as both representations must be true, and God and Satan must both be concerned in the effect, it seems to be the proper way of reconciling them, to suppose, that while God withholds his Spirit, who would illuminate their minds, he permits Satan to use his arts to deceive them. Although we are ignorant of the mode in which Satan acts upon the mind, yet we are certain, from the testimony of Scripture, that he possesses the means of strengthening its prejudices, and stirring up its passions in opposition to the truth. But there is nothing positive in the part which God takes in this matter, except that his Providence may so order the circumstances of sinners, that, being already averse to spiritual things, they shall hence find an occasion of being confirmed in their dislike. He does not blind them by weakening or confounding their understandings, or by suggesting objections against the gospel; these come from themselves, or from the secret insinuations of the spirit of error and falsehood.

When God is said to tempt man, there is no difficulty, because the word may be used in a good, or in a bad sense. It is used in a good sense, when the Scripture says, that "God did tempt Abraham;" † for the meaning is, that by commanding him to offer in sacrifice his only son, upon whose life the

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

† Gen. xxii. 1.

performance of the promises depended, he made trial of his faith, and gave him an opportunity of manifesting it, to the glory of Divine grace and his own honour, as well as for an example to succeeding generations. It is used in a bad sense when it expresses the methods employed to entice men to sin ; and to apply it to God in this sense, would be blasphemy : “ Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” *

What shall we make of the following words ? “ If the prophet be deceived, when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet.” † After the remarks already made, we cannot suppose that, strong as this language is, it imports that God had actually deceived him ; but it must be understood to mean, that, if the idolatrous Jews, who are mentioned in the context, had consulted a person calling himself a prophet, and he, fancying himself to be what he pretended, and imposed upon by his own imagination, had delivered a prediction which proved to be false, God was to be considered as having a righteous hand in this transaction, and making use of the presumption of this man to punish his rebellious people. God had deceived him, because he had permitted him to be the dupe of his own pretensions, and refused to impart to him a true revelation, as he had formerly done to Balaam for a particular purpose.

But we hear similar language employed by a true prophet with respect to himself : “ O Lord,” said Jeremiah, “ thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.” ‡ To evade the difficulty, the words have been rendered, “ Thou hast allured me, and I was allured.” ‘ It was thou who didst persuade me to undertake the prophetic office ; it was by thy powerful influence upon my mind, that my reluctance was overcome, and I consented to engage in it, notwithstanding the opposition and danger which I foresaw as the consequence of doing my duty.’ Without changing the translation, the words may be explained hypothetically. ‘ If I have been deceived, as my enemies allege, who do not acknowledge me to be a true prophet, I have been deceived by thee, by whom I was called to the

* James i. 13.

† Ezek. xiv. 9.

‡ Jer. xx. 7.

office.' But the latter being impossible, the former was not true ; and consequently, the charges against Jeremiah as if he had spoken lies, terminated upon God who had sent him. If neither of these views of the words should be deemed satisfactory, we may set them down to the account of human infirmity. Perhaps they were uttered by Jeremiah, when his mind was ruffled by the contradiction and reproaches of his countrymen ; and if this is the true state of the case, whatever is their meaning, he alone is answerable for it. They are a rash and unfounded charge against God, similar to that which was made by that peevish and irritable prophet Jonah, who presumed to say, in answer to the question of his Maker, "Doest thou well to be angry?—I do well to be angry, even unto death."*

It is easy to apply these observations to other passages which speak of the agency of God in the sinful actions of men, as when he threatened "to take David's wives, and give them to his neighbour, who should lie with them in the sight of the sun,"† and when he is said to have "bidden Shimei curse him,"‡ "to have put a lying spirit into the mouths of Ahab's prophets,"§ and "to have turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people, and to deal subtilly with his servants."§ Some allowance should be made for the oriental style, which admits a boldness of expression, not so suitable to the more correct and philosophical languages of the west. When transferred into our language without qualification, it conveys ideas different from those which were intended by the original writers. Hence, I cannot but think that those Divines have greatly erred, who imagined that Scripture authorized them to make use of the strongest and harshest terms in speaking of this mysterious subject. It would have been wise, since nothing is more certain than that God is not the Author of sin, to have carefully avoided every term which seemed to lead to this impious conclusion. All the passages which have been quoted, and others of a similar nature, may be explained by admitting, that God permits sin, and upholds sinful creatures in the exercise of their faculties. This is

* Jonah iv. 4, 9.

† 2 Sam. xii. 11.

‡ Ib. xvi. 11.

§ 1 Kings xxii. 23.

§ Ps. cv. 25.

surely safer, and more consonant to our conceptions of his character, than to say with Calvin, that the devil and wicked men act by his command, and that they are so completely in his power, that he compels them to act.

I have considered the objects of Providence, and have shewn that it extends its care to all created beings, and, in particular, is concerned in the actions of intelligent creatures. Before leaving the subject, it will be proper to say a few words with respect to what has been called God's peculiar, or more accurately perhaps, his gracious providence, the objects of which are his own people. It may be observed in general, that it implies a difference, not so much in its acts towards them, as in its design. It is not miraculous; it does not suspend the laws of nature in favour of its objects, although it occasionally did so in former times; it does not consist in visible interpositions. I acknowledge that remarkable things do sometimes take place in the experience of the righteous, which fully satisfy them that they have been wrought by the hands of their heavenly Father; but still they are not deviations from the laws of nature, so far as we are acquainted with them. I make this limitation, because, although we have ascertained the laws by which the material system is governed, we are, in a great measure, ignorant of the laws of the spiritual world. Hence our views of Providence are imperfect, because many of its operations are carried on, not only by the instrumentality of the thoughts and volitions of men, but also by the agency of invisible beings. To them the care of the righteous is entrusted, and they are said "to minister to them," "to encamp about them," "to bear them up in their hands, lest they should dash their foot against a stone." Yet, when we look at the persons who are thus favoured, we see that they are placed in the same external circumstances with other men, and that similar events occur in the course of their and other men's lives. They are rich or poor; they are sick or in health; they meet with successes and disappointments; they have their sorrows and their comforts: but these things are ordered by unerring wisdom, and are rendered subservient to their most important interests. They mortify their sinful inclinations, exercise their graces, excite them to duty, and

train them up in a course of progressive holiness, to eternal life. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose."* In short, this department of Providence is a uniform dispensation of love. The glory of God in the salvation of his people is its ultimate end, to which, the evils of life as well as its good things, the opposition of adversaries as well as the co-operation of friends, contribute by a mysterious process. It might be illustrated by an appeal to the Scriptures, which are a history of Providence in relation to the world at large, but particularly of its procedure towards the Church and its genuine members. "All the saints are in the hand of God," and "he keeps them as the apple of his eye."

I proceed, in the last place, to take notice of the objections against the doctrine of Providence. It is not surprising that, in a mind disposed to cavil, objections should occur, as the subject is manifestly too extensive and complicated to be fully understood. We may see a part of the scheme, but cannot comprehend the whole. Now, as it may happen with respect to the plans of men, of which we have an imperfect idea on account of their intricacy and extent, that they shall appear to us defective or confused, although they have been arranged with consummate wisdom; much more may we be tempted to draw this conclusion concerning the mighty plan, which embraces the affairs of the visible and the invisible world, and reaches from the beginning to the end of time. "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power who can understand?"† There are difficulties in many subjects, which are not considered as sufficient to make us doubt or disbelieve if the evidence in their favour preponderates. It would not be consistent with the character of rational creatures to give our assent without evidence; but we must often be content with partial evidence, by which I mean, evidence that may be justly considered as amounting to a proof, although it does not fully remove every objection. In such a case, instead of setting the evidence aside on account of the difficulties, we should make the difficulties yield to the evidence. In this manner we

* Rom. viii. 28.

† Job xxvi. 14.

proceed in many of the most important affairs of life; and there is no reason why we should not pursue the same method in matters of religion.

Some of the most formidable objections against the doctrine of Providence, have been anticipated; namely, those which are founded on the existence of moral evil, the agency of God in the sinful actions of men, and its supposed incompatibility with human liberty. Of these I have attempted to give a solution, and shall not, therefore, consider them again. Let us direct our attention to other objections.

The first objection which I shall mention, would not occur to any person who entertained a worthy idea of God, but has been advanced both in ancient and in modern times. It is, that the doctrine of Providence supposes God to have his attention occupied and distracted with a multitude of cares; of which some are in danger of being neglected, and all are inconsistent with the enjoyment of undisturbed felicity. This was the great argument of the Epicureans; and it may still seem to have force, to those who apply the standard of humanity to the Divine nature. Those who are affected by this objection, must be persons of a very shallow understanding. With regard to the multiplicity of objects about which Providence is conversant, we may reason from analogy. We find that the human mind is capable of attending to a considerable number at once, or in quick succession, and of managing different concerns, although they are of a complicated nature. If we should suppose its powers to be greatly enlarged, to be raised, for example, to an equality with those of angels, we could conceive its sphere of observation and activity to be extended, without in any degree increasing its labour. Now, if we suppose an infinite understanding, which reason and Scripture attribute to the Deity, it must be capable, not only of attending to all the affairs of the world and the universe, but of attending to them without an effort; for the labour which accompanies the exercise of man's intellectual faculties, is the consequence of their imperfection. We must inquire, and compare, and judge; we must pass from one subject to another; and in this way we feel fatigued, whether the feeling arises from mind itself, or from the influ-

ence of the body upon it. The knowledge of God being infinite, embraces all things which exist, however obscure and minute; and being intuitive, is as easy to him as to man is a glance of his eye. All created things are before him; they are naked and open in their essences, their properties, their operations, their thoughts and designs. It costs a man no labour, when the sun is shining, to look at the objects on the table at which he is sitting; it costs no more labour to God to know all the creatures and all the events in the universe, because he is intimately present with them all. If it be objected, that Providence implies not only the knowledge, but the care of all things, I answer, that this care is not burdensome to the Deity, because his power is almighty, as his understanding is unlimited. There can be no resistance to almighty power; and its purposes are accomplished without exertion. This is manifest from the idea of infinite power, and is confirmed by the Scriptures, which represent him as performing all his works by his word, that is, with the same ease with which we pronounce a word. "The Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary."* Hear how even a heathen philosopher, Aristotle, has expressed himself on the subject. "What a pilot is to a ship, a charioteer to a chariot, a chief musician to a chorus, the law to a city, a general to an army; all this is God to the universe; but with this difference, that to those persons the management of their respective departments is toilsome and painful, while it costs God neither labour nor pain to govern the universe."

In the second place, it has been objected, that the doctrine of Providence degrades the majesty of God, by representing him as extending his attention and care to objects altogether unworthy of him; to creatures the most insignificant, to a fly, a mite, and an animalcule, which the human eye cannot perceive without the assistance of a microscope. It is a fact, however, that such creatures exist; and it will be acknowledged by every Theist, that they exist by the will of the Creator. If, then, it was worthy of God to give them being, how is it unworthy of him to uphold them? We cannot

* Is. xl. 28.

assign the reason why such creatures were made, because we are ignorant of the purpose which they serve; but the simple fact of their existence is a proof, that there was a sufficient reason why God exerted his power in their production. The objection, therefore, against Providence, founded on their apparent insignificance, arises from the most stupid inattention; for a moment's reflection would convince any ordinary understanding, that the objection, if made at all, should be made not against the care, but against the existence of such creatures; and that, after they have been brought into being, there is not the shadow of an argument from the dignity of the Divine nature, against the continuance of their life. To a man of piety, such creatures would rather furnish matter of admiration and praise. He would extol that Being who has been said to be "*maximus in minimis*," and whose power does certainly astonish us in the least, as in the greatest of his works. In a fly or a mite, or an animalcule, there are muscles, and nerves, and vessels for circulating the blood, and organs of digestion, and organs of sense; and these are assembled in a point indiscernible to the keenest human eye. If meditation on these wonders of Divine skill awaken devout sentiments in any bosom, such creatures have not been made in vain; and what a sublime idea does it give us of the goodness of God, to think that it communicates itself, not only to the angelical hosts, to the rational inhabitants of our globe, and to the lower animals, which daily fall under our observation; but to myriads of living particles, nestling on a leaf, or swimming in a drop of water, or burrowing in a grain of sand! Cold and impious is the heart of that man, in whose eyes it does not exalt the Deity, to conceive of him as the bountiful Parent of innumerable orders of creatures; as the Guardian and Benefactor of the meanest of his offspring; as diffusing his beneficence over the whole extent of creation, and making the extremities of being teem with life and enjoyment! "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." *

In the third place, it is objected against the doctrine of

* Ps. cxlv. 15, 16.

Providence, that there are many facts which appear to be inconsistent with the wisdom and benevolence of an almighty Ruler of the world, namely, all the physical evils which impair the beauty and happiness of the creation ; the barrenness of many places of the earth, the profusion of weeds and noxious plants which it yields, the excesses of heat and cold, of moisture and drought, by which its valuable fruits are destroyed ; to which may be added, all the other calamities to which mankind are exposed. It is a common answer to this objection, that the evils complained of, or some of them at least, are the consequences of general laws ; and that, although when viewed by themselves, they may seem to impeach the goodness and wisdom of the Deity, yet they cease to appear in this light, when considered as the necessary result of laws, which are the foundation of the regularity of nature, and a source of innumerable blessings to men. This answer, I do not consider as at all satisfactory ; for it supposes, that those evils are necessary attendants of the system ; that they could not have been avoided ; and that, although not the objects of the primary intention of the Deity, they were contemplated by him, and admitted in the formation of his plan. It would seem, that they could not have been excluded ; that they were inseparable from the plan which he adopted ; and that they were chosen on account of the greater good with which they would be associated. They are not properly a part of the plan, but an imperfection adhering to it, which could have been avoided only by a different arrangement. They arise from what is good, but in themselves they are pure evils ; and being, as we may say, accidental, they promote no particular design, and constitute no part of the moral administration of God.—This answer to the objection leaves it in all its force ; for it accounts for the existence of physical evil in a way, which does not, in the least degree, dispel our doubts of the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator. Where is his wisdom, if he could not have contrived a system of laws, from which no such consequences should have ensued ? And where is his goodness, if, being able to contrive such a system, he did not prefer it ? The answer certainly exhibits God too much in the light of a human Artist, who is limited in his

means, and has no choice but to employ them, notwithstanding the inconveniences with which they are accompanied. Another method of repelling the objection, is to turn round upon the objectors, and deny that those are properly evils, or at least to shew, that they are ultimately productive of good. Plausible things may be advanced in support of this theory. It may be proved, that in some instances evil leads to good; that volcanic eruptions, for example, prevent earthquakes; tempests purify the atmosphere; the sterility of the soil and the uncertainty of the seasons excite industry, and quicken ingenuity. But it is only to a limited extent that this explanation can be carried; and even as far as it goes, it does not satisfy our minds, but leaves a suspicion of the imperfection of the divine wisdom or goodness, as if the one could not attain its end without the instrumentality of evil, or the other preferred it without necessity. There is a radical error in this method of vindicating Providence. It proceeds upon inattention to the moral character of our species. Those who adopt it, seem to think, that they are called upon to account, in a manner consistent with the goodness of the Deity, for the existence of real or apparent evil, in a world where unmixed happiness might be looked for; that is, in a world of innocent beings. How different is the actual state of mankind, our own experience will inform us. This world is a rebellious province, and is there any reason to be surprised, that there should be some tokens of the displeasure of its Sovereign? The existence of evil is so far from being inconsistent with his goodness, that it tends to illustrate it; since we find there is still goodness exercised with much liberality to creatures, who being sinful, are altogether unworthy of it. But we should remember, that wisdom and goodness are not his only attributes. He is just, and as the Ruler of the world, might display his justice in the punishment of offenders, that the authority of his law may be maintained. Hence it follows, that the evils which are found in the world, instead of disproving the doctrine of Providence, confirm it; in the same manner as the penalties inflicted upon criminals in any part of a kingdom, prove that there the Sovereign exercises his authority. Consider mankind as a rebellious race, and the earth as lying

under the curse of the Creator for their sake, and the objection will appear lighter than vanity. Those facts and occurrences, which are supposed to imply a want of benevolence, will instantly be seen to be in exact accordance with moral rectitude; and after all this deduction, there will remain abundant evidence, that “the tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works.”

The last objection which I shall mention, is founded on the afflictions of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked. As it is a fact, that vice often triumphs, while virtue is depressed, that the guilty escape with impunity, while the innocent are treated as if they were guilty; a doubt may arise, as it has actually arisen, whether God exercises a moral government over mankind. “How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?”* “I have often,” said a heathen, “been at a loss to determine, whether God or chance presides over the lot of men, since the good fall into misfortunes, which overwhelm them; and persons of an opposite character enjoy in their families a brilliant prosperity, contrary to all expectation.” On the same ground, arguments and insinuations have been thrown out in modern times, to obscure the evidence, and subvert the authority of religion. With regard to the righteous, I may say that they are imperfect beings, chargeable with many failings and transgressions, which render them worthy of correction. Pure virtue, if it existed upon earth, might expect to have a portion of pure felicity assigned to it; but mixed virtue has no reason to complain, although it should be presented with a cup containing bitter as well as sweet ingredients. I believe that no good man will, in an hour of calm and solemn reflection, make his own condition, however hard it may be, an argument against Providence, because he will readily acknowledge that he is less than the least of God’s mercies, and deserves all the evil which has befallen him. I may say further, that happiness is not to be judged of solely or principally by external circumstances; for that although these, if disagreeable, will necessarily cause a deduction, yet it may be compensated by internal satisfaction, flowing from a sense of the divine

* Ps. lxxiii. 11.

favour, and the hope of future rest and joy. While the world is pitying an individual, and pronouncing that he is hardly dealt with, he may be elevated above a sense of sorrow, by the strong consolations of religion. Lastly, I may say, that the afflictions of the righteous are so far from disproving the care and goodness of Providence, that they are the surest evidences of its love; because their express design is to purify them from the stain of sin; to prepare them for the reception of blessings to be afterwards bestowed in the present life, and to train them up, by salutary discipline, for a state of perfection. "When you see the virtuous," says Seneca, "groaning with pain, toiling with the sweat of their brows, and struggling with adversity, consider, that God acts from the same principle as we do, when we wish that our children should be modest and discreet, while we leave vile slaves to themselves. The interest which he takes in a good man does not permit that he should live in delights; he tries him, and hardens him for labour, and thus prepares him for himself."

The prosperity of the wicked may be accounted for in various ways. In some instances, God may have a merciful design; for although they often "despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance,"* yet his grace, concurring with his external dispensations, may excite them to consider and glorify their Divine Benefactor, and to consecrate themselves and their possessions to his service. At other times, he may give them prosperity, not on their own account, but for the sake of those who are connected with them, making use of them as channels by which his bounty is communicated to their families, their dependants, their neighbourhood, and their country. Once more, under the specious appearance of prosperity, the displeasure of God against them may be concealed. While all things are succeeding according to their wish, means and opportunities are afforded of indulging their unholy desires; and, becoming secure and careless, they are prepared for the destruction which will finally overtake them. The tendency of prosperity is to estrange the human heart more and more from God, and to

* Rom. ii. 4.

induce an insensibility to the concerns of eternity ; and in this view it is not a blessing, but a curse. Asaph was perplexed with the difficulty which the external condition of the wicked presents, but he was relieved by this consideration :—" Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world ; they increase in riches.—When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them on slippery places : thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment ! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." *

An equal dispensation appears necessary to the objectors, to establish the doctrine of an over-ruling Providence. Let us consider what is meant by an equal dispensation. It is an exact distribution of rewards and punishments in the present state, an allotment of temporal good and evil to men, according to their desert : but, although such a dispensation is plausible in theory, and it may be imagined that it could be easily realized, when we enter into detail we shall find, that it is attended with insuperable difficulties. According to this plan, it would be necessary that good men should enjoy uninterrupted prosperity, and consequently, that all the troubles and uneasinesses which arise from a thousand causes, should be warded off ; that no disease should overtake them ; that no trial should befall them, in their persons, or their families, or their friends ; that their lawful schemes should always succeed, or that they should be prevented from thinking of schemes with which Providence would not concur ; in short, that all nature should minister to them, and no part of it should ever interfere with their designs, or give them any disturbance. It would be necessary, on the other hand, that a process exactly the reverse should take place with respect to the wicked ; that all precautions for the preservation of their health should be unavailing ; that all the exertions of their industry should prove abortive ; that every thing which they touched should be a sting, and every thing which

* Ps. lxxiii. 12, 16—20.

they tasted should be bitter. I need not say that this plan would require a complete change of the laws of nature, or such frequent alterations of them, that they would no longer serve as a guide to human conduct.

An equal dispensation, which some men demand, could not take place but under a totally different system, and if now introduced, would involve all things in inextricable confusion. It will appear possible only to the most thoughtless of mankind. If the head of a family were an irreligious man, this scheme would require that he should be immediately punished; but observe, that he could not be punished alone. Whether his substance was wasted by a series of calamities, or he was cut off from the land of the living, his children would suffer by the loss of their natural guardian, or of the means of their subsistence; and the equality of the dispensation would be instantly destroyed. The same thing would happen if the children were wicked and the parent were pious; for every stroke which lighted upon them would fall upon him, and the innocent would be involved in the same condemnation with the guilty. Such is the intermixture of mankind, by a variety of relations, that the separate treatment of each individual according to his desert, is at present impossible. This is assigned by our Lord as the reason why bad men are permitted to mingle with the good, and to hold their place in society, contrary to what it might seem to us perfect justice demands:—"Wilt thou," said the servants to their master, when they had discovered tares among the wheat, "wilt thou, that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." *

Let it not be supposed, that, when we speak of Divine Providence, we mean by it a perfect moral administration. We see only its commencement, and must wait for its full development at the proper season. Its subjects are at present in a state of trial; by which I mean, that they are placed in circumstances which present them with opportunities of doing good or evil, and although they may be treated in part accord-

* Matth. xiii. 28—30.

ing to their conduct, yet the full retribution will not take place till their course is finished. We have seen that there are wise and necessary reasons why it is delayed. Hence the appearances of injustice, which have distressed good men, and furnished the bad with an argument against Providence, ought to give us no disturbance. Amidst the darkness which surrounds us, we see enough to convince us that there is a Supreme Governor, and that he loves righteousness and hates iniquity ; and we are assured, that ere long his judgment will be openly revealed. There is sufficient evidence that Heaven is on the side of virtue, notwithstanding its trials, and against vice, notwithstanding its occasional success ; and we are authorized to believe that virtue will ultimately triumph, and that vice will be expelled from the kingdom of God. “ He cometh to judge the earth : He shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth.” *

* Ps. xcvi. 13.

LECTURE XLIV.

ON THE FALL OF MAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

FALLIBILITY OF ADAM IN HIS STATE OF INNOCENCE.—HIS SUBJECTION TO THE LAW OF GOD.—COMMAND RESPECTING THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.—PENALTY ATTACHED TO IT.—ADAM'S TEMPTATION, AND BREACH OF THE COMMAND.—IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES TO OUR FIRST PARENTS.

WE have seen that, having finished all his other works upon earth, God made man to be the lord of the inferior creatures. * His body was formed of the dust of the ground, and was animated by an intelligent and immortal spirit. It has appeared that, besides the gift of reason, by which he was distinguished from the other inhabitants of the earth, he was endowed with original righteousness, which properly constituted the image of God with which he was adorned, and fitted him for fulfilling the end of his creation, by glorifying the Author of his being. The happiness which he enjoyed was suitable to his compound nature, which derived pure pleasure from the external objects with which he was surrounded, and still higher satisfaction from conscious rectitude, and a sense of the Divine favour. Placed in the fairest spot of the earth, where his eye, his ear, and all his senses were delighted, he held high communion with his Maker, and while he poured out his soul in adoration and thanksgiving, rejoiced in the communications of his love.

* Lecture XL.

But this happy state was not of long continuance. We have no reason to think, that man sinned on the day of his creation ; but we have as little reason to believe, that he retained his innocence for years. “The gold soon became dim ; the fine gold was speedily changed.” There was only a short interval, when the favourite of heaven incurred its displeasure, and the beauty of holiness in which he was arrayed, was succeeded by the most revolting deformity. Into this melancholy and disastrous event we are now to inquire ; and while we are speaking of the sin of the first man and its lamentable consequences, let us remember, how deeply interesting the subject is to ourselves, who are his descendants, and derive from him not only our nature, but all the guilt and pollution which are now associated with it.

Although man was perfectly holy, yet he was fallible, as every creature necessarily is. I do not say that every creature must actually fall ; but that the nature of a created being is such, that a change from good to evil, from virtue to vice, and consequently, from happiness to misery, is by no means impossible. This does not imply any imperfection in the work of God. Immutability is an attribute of his own nature, which cannot be communicated. He could indeed afford such assistance to his intelligent creatures that no temptation should overcome them, and give perpetual stability to their habits of holiness ; but still it would be true, that considered in themselves they were subject to change. Mutability is inseparable from the idea of a created free agent. Freedom of will implies the power of choice ; that is, it implies, that of two objects presented to him, a person may choose the one or the other. If he can choose the one, but cannot choose the other ; if he is restrained by the law of his nature from acting, except in one particular way ; he is not free, in the sense in which the term is commonly used. He is a creature totally different from men and angels, because he does not possess that liberty with which they are endowed. We have no reason to think, that this liberty will cease even in a state of perfection, with which it is not more inconsistent than it was with the innocence of paradise ; for, although the will of the saints will be invariably determined to good, the determination will not

be the effect of physical force, by which choice is taken away ; but of the clear convictions of their minds, and the purity of their whole nature. They will still be as free as ever, because they will be what they are with their own full consent. If they cannot sin, the reason is, that they will not. From these observations it appears, that, although the fall of man did not necessarily result from his original constitution, yet it was the consequence of it. His will being free, he might refuse good and choose evil.

If it should be asked, Why did God bestow upon man a power, by the abuse of which his own authority might be insulted, and the happiness of the universe might be impaired ? it may be remarked, that this is the amount of the question, Why did God make a creature capable of being the subject of law, and of obtaining a reward ? Had man not possessed liberty of choice, he could not have yielded moral obedience. He might have been so constructed, as to go through the forms of duty, as the index of a clock points out successively the hours on the dial-plate ; but there would have been no virtue in his movements ; and he would have glorified God only as he is glorified by fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy winds, which fulfil his word. As the heavens and the earth exhibited innumerable examples of this kind of obedience, this conformity to his will in which intelligence had no share, it was necessary to the perfection of his work, that a creature should be raised up, who, knowing his Maker, and approving of his will, might execute his commands from design, and under the influence of gratitude and love. It was necessary to complete the scene, that a being should be introduced, to exemplify the moral as well as the physical dependence of the creature upon its Maker, and to honour him not only as the First Cause, but as the righteous Governor of his works. It is evident that this design could be accomplished only by means of a creature endowed with intelligence and choice.

But why, it may be asked again, did not God guard against the fatal consequences of liberty, by fortifying the mind of man against temptation, in the same manner as the saints, according to the doctrine of Calvinists, are preserved by his secret power from total and final apostasy ? What is this but

to ask, why he has permitted sin? a question which may be proposed with a view to perplex, but not in the hope of a satisfactory answer, as it has baffled the ingenuity of the wise and learned, in all ages of the world. If any person should think, that it was inconsistent with the goodness of God not to afford such assistance to man as should secure him against danger, he must proceed a step farther, and maintain that it was inconsistent with his goodness, to invest man with a power, the abuse of which might involve him in misery. It would follow, that it was unworthy of God to make such a creature as man; and that he, whom we have been accustomed to consider as the head and crown of this lower world, was the only part of it which impeached the wisdom and benevolence of its Author. To inquiries of this nature we are not competent; and as an attempt to explore the counsels of the Almighty, which he has not revealed, is manifestly impious, so, it is calculated to have an unhappy influence on our minds, and to lead us on from presumption to infidelity and atheism. It is certain, that God endowed man with freedom of will; it is certain that in the exercise of this freedom, man lost his innocence and happiness; it is certain that God was holy and righteous in this, as in all his other dispensations. Here let us rest, and patiently wait, till in another state our doubts shall be solved.

Man having been created a free agent, was the proper subject of command, and accordingly was placed under the law of his Creator, the knowledge of which was immediately infused into his mind. This law was virtually the same with that which was afterwards engraven upon two tables of stone, and is in every age the standard of duty. To all the precepts of the law, he was bound to yield obedience; and as we have already seen, he was furnished with sufficient powers for complying with the will of his Maker. It pleased God, however, to sum up his obedience in one point; without loosening the obligation of the other precepts, to fix his attention upon one positive injunction, that the strength and steadiness of his moral principles might be tried, and it might be ascertained, whether he was influenced by a pure regard to his naked authority. The fact is thus related by Moses: "And the

Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”*

It has been said, that it was unworthy of God to interpose his authority in a matter so trifling, and that it is incredible that he would have exposed our first parent to the hazard of ruining himself and his posterity by eating an apple. Whether, according to the celebrated maxim, ridicule be the test of truth or not, the state of mind which it implies, is not the most favourable for the calm investigation of it; and it is certain that, by a little artifice, the gravest subject may be exhibited in a ludicrous light. It will not be denied, that God had a right to prohibit the use of the tree of knowledge, as he was the sole proprietor of all the trees in the garden. It is manifest, that the prohibition did not proceed from malevolence, or an intention to impair the happiness of man; because, with this single reservation, he was at liberty to appropriate the rich variety of fruit with which paradise was stored. It is certain that, situated as he was, no command could be easier, as it properly implied no sacrifice, no painful privation, but simple abstinence from one out of many things; for who would deem it a hardship, while he was sitting at a table covered with all kinds of delicate and substantial food, to be told, that there was one and only one which he was forbidden to taste? It is farther evident, that no reason could be assigned, why Adam should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but the divine prohibition. The fruit was as good for food as that of any other tree, and as pleasant to the eye; and there was nothing sacred in it, which would have been profaned by human touch. Hence you will perceive that, if God had an intention to make trial of the dispositions of his newly formed subject, he could not have chosen a more proper method; as it indicated nothing like a harsh or tyrannical exercise of authority, and was admirably fitted to ascertain whether his simple command would be to him instead of all other reasons for obedience. It is not a proper trial of reverence for a superior, when the action which he prescribes is recommended by other

* Gen. ii. 16, 17.

considerations. It is when it stands upon the sole foundation of his authority ; when, having no intrinsic goodness, it becomes good only by his positive injunction ; when the sole inducement to perform it is his command ; it is in these circumstances, that it is known whether we duly feel and recognise our moral dependence upon him. The morality of an action does not depend upon its abstract nature, but upon its relation to the law of God. Men seem often to judge of actions, as they judge of material substances, by their bulk. What is great in itself or in its consequences, they will admit to be a sin ; but what appears little, they pronounce to be a slight fault, or no fault at all. Had Adam, it has been remarked, been possessed of preternatural power, and wantonly and wickedly exerted it in blasting the beauty of paradise, and turning it into a scene of desolation, they would have granted that he was guilty of a great and daring offence, for which a curse was justly pronounced upon him. But they can see no harm in so trifling a matter as the eating of a little fruit. Nothing however is more fallacious than such reasoning ; the essence of sin is the transgression of a law ; and whether that law forbids you to commit murder, or to move your finger, it is equally transgressed when you violate the precept. Whatever the act of disobedience is, it is rebellion against the law-giver ; it is a renunciation of his authority ; it dissolves that moral dependence upon him, which is founded on the nature of things, and is necessary to maintain the order and happiness of the universe. The injunction therefore to abstain from the tree of knowledge, was a proper trial of the obedience of our first parent ; and the violation of it deserved the dreadful punishment which was denounced and executed. He was put to the test, whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes ; and he was punished because he gave the preference to his own.

The command, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, was accompanied with a penalty, to be inflicted in case of transgression : “ In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Into the extent of this penalty, I shall afterwards inquire ; and at present shall only observe, that while he was obviously threatened with the loss of the

present life by the separation of his soul from his body, he was farther exposed to the deprivation of the divine favour, and the everlasting misery consequent upon it. Although a promise was not expressly made, yet it was implied in the threatening. If death would be the punishment of transgression, life would be the reward of obedience; the continuance not only of his animal life without end, but of all the happiness which he enjoyed in fellowship with his Maker, with such augmentations as his Maker might be pleased to confer in the exercise of his bounty, and in adaptation to the progressive and expanding faculties of his mind. In this transaction, there are all the constituents of a covenant. There were two parties, God and man; there was a condition prescribed, which man, as he was in duty bound, engaged to perform; there was a penalty, which would be incurred in case of failure; and there was a reward, to which he would be entitled by the fulfilment of the terms. It is worthy of attention, that although, through the sin of man, the consequences of this transaction have been fatal, considered in itself it was a proof of the goodness of God. Its immediate aim was to insure the happiness of our whole race, in a compendious way, by suspending it upon the obedience of our common progenitor, to whom the condition prescribed was perfectly easy, and no inducement was wanting to excite him to fulfil it. Besides, it put it in his power to acquire a right to immortal felicity, to which he could have possessed no claim, on the ground of the value or the extent of his services. Whatever obedience he was able to perform, he owed it to God, from whom he had received all his powers, physical and moral. Merit on the part of a creature, towards the Author of his being, and of all his privileges and blessings, is impossible; the idea of it is manifestly absurd. But, in consequence of the promise of God, that, if our first parent should obey his command, he would reward him, an opportunity was furnished of establishing a claim upon his faithfulness, for his own felicity and that of his descendants. This convention between God and man, is sometimes called the Covenant of Life, because life or happiness was the subject of the promise; and more frequently the Covenant of Works, because

works or obedience was the condition of it. Of this covenant, the tree of life, which also grew in the garden, may be considered as a seal. It probably received its name, not because there was some mysterious virtue in its fruit to render the body immortal; but because, if Adam had obeyed the voice of his Maker, he would have been allowed to eat of it, as a pledge or earnest of the eternal life to which he had now obtained a right. I take this opportunity of stating, with respect to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that it was probably so called, because, as is often said, man should eventually know good and evil by its means; good by the loss of it, and evil by painful experience: or rather because, if he abstained from violating it, he should know good, or continue to enjoy it; but otherwise, he should actually feel the evil of the threatening.

But, although the law given to man was easy, it was soon broken. The event is thus related by Moses: "Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."* Some consider this passage as an allegorical representation of the origin of moral evil. It is unnecessary to inquire how they explain it, as they have nothing to guide them but their own fancies; and some give one account of it, and others another. There seems to be no reason for deviating from the literal sense, (which is favoured by other passages of Scripture), notwithstanding some difficulties which

* Gen. iii. 1—6.

occur in the narrative. The chief difficulty consists in what is said of the serpent. There is no doubt that the animal known by that name, was employed in the temptation of our first parents; but it may seem incredible that it should have uttered articulate sounds, as it was destitute of reason, and the gift of speech is known to be the peculiar attribute of man. The only solution of the difficulty is to suppose, that the invisible agent in the temptation, of whom we shall immediately speak, was permitted to cause such vibrations of the air, by means of the organs of the serpent, or in its mouth, as made the woman hear the words already recited. The serpent had no knowledge of what was spoken, and attached no meaning to the words which it uttered; they were properly the words of the superior being, who used it as his instrument. No man should say that the thing was impossible, unless he can prove that it was impossible for a superior being, with divine permission, so to move the air, that it should convey such sounds to the ear as he pleased; and every doubt should be superseded by the authority of Moses.

I have referred to an invisible agent, because it is certain that the serpent itself could not have spoken and reasoned; and the Scripture signifies, that the fall of our first parents was owing to the solicitations of a spiritual being. It calls the Devil, the old serpent,* in allusion to this transaction; and because, by his deceitful arts, he brought death into the world, it says, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth."† The author of the temptation was that spirit, who is the leader and prince of the apostate angels. Limited as is our information respecting that order of creatures, we know that some of them rebelled against God; that for their sin, they were cast down into hell; but that, although reserved in chains to the judgment of the great day, they are not constantly confined to their prison, but are permitted to visit the earth. This liberty had been granted to their chief soon after the creation; and he employed it in carrying on his hostile designs against God, upon whom he wished to avenge himself for the punishment which he had justly inflicted upon him. While this was his principal motive, we may conceive

Rev. xii. 9.

† John viii. 44.

him also to have been actuated by envy towards man, who enjoyed the favour of his Maker; and whose happiness in paradise was an image of the heavenly bliss from which he had himself been excluded. If he should succeed in seducing man from his allegiance, he would involve him in the same misery with himself; an event which would be gratifying to the malignity of his nature; and, at the same time, he would defeat the purpose of his Creator, whom he hated, and the obscuration of whose glory would be his highest triumph. Thus impelled by the darkest and fiercest principles of his nature, he was impatient to accomplish his design; and soon after our first parents had begun to taste the sweets of existence, he attempted, with too much success, to ensnare them.

The prohibition respecting the tree of knowledge, furnished the occasion of the temptation; and its name supplied him with an argument to enforce it. He boldly affirmed, that the eating of its fruit, instead of subjecting them to death, as they feared, would exalt them in the scale of intelligence; and that they should become as gods, or beings of a superior order, knowing good and evil. Remark the consummate art of the deceiver. Had he addressed himself to the animal part of their nature; had he held out the allurements of sensual pleasure; had he appealed only to the beauty and delicious taste of the fruit, his proposal would have been immediately rejected. Still untainted with sin, they were not to be drawn aside from the path of rectitude, by those low and paltry gratifications, which exert so powerful an influence upon their degraded children. He adapted the temptation to the nobler part of their nature; and held out the specious but deceitful promise of such an augmentation of wisdom, as should elevate them above their present condition, and render them worthy to associate with the inhabitants of the celestial regions.

It is difficult to conceive how they could be imposed upon by the words of the serpent, between which and the words of God there was an express contradiction. We may be apt to think that were a person of the highest reputation, or even an angel from heaven, to affirm, that any thing which God had told us was not true, we would not give credit to him. How then is it possible, that they, who were so much superior

to us in intellectual and moral endowments, should be persuaded that their Creator had deceived them? The question is an important one, and it is not easy to return a satisfactory answer to it. It is no light task to explain by what process sin found access into a holy soul.

Man was endowed, not only with the knowledge of his duty and a fixed inclination to it, but also with various appetites, affections, and desires, which were constituent principles of his nature. These having been given to him by his Maker, were innocent in themselves, and might be innocently gratified; and as long as they were subject to his superior principles, and regulated by them, he was perfect according to the state in which he was placed. But, although it was the office of the moral principle to superintend and direct them, their excitement might anticipate its interference, and be suddenly caused by the presence of the proper objects; whatever seemed good was naturally fitted to awaken desire, and whatever seemed evil, naturally to awaken aversion. It follows, that, if conscience was hindered by any means from doing its duty, if an appetite or a desire was permitted for a moment to exist without the proper check, the harmony of the soul would be immediately disturbed; and the desire or appetite having acquired new strength, would press forward to its gratification without waiting for the approbation of conscience. Let us apply these observations to the case before us. In man in a state of innocence, the desire of knowledge must have existed, because, being a finite creature, he was capable of endless improvement in wisdom: all that was necessary was, that the gratification of this desire should be sought only by such means as his Creator might approve. In this state of mind, the prospect of acquiring knowledge would naturally excite the desire; and at this critical moment, the exercise of virtue consisted in subjecting it to moral restraint. To permit the desire to continue, without due consideration of the means, was a fault; and besides, gave it time to gather such force as might impel to immediate indulgence. In this way, we may account for the sin of our first parents. The affirmation of the serpent, that the eating of the forbidden fruit would be followed by a great increase of knowledge,

awakened their desire ; while they were reflecting upon his words, the moral principle was thrown off its guard ; the desire became urgent, and fixed their attention solely upon its object ; which at length so fascinated them, that they lost all power of resistance, and yielded to the temptation. The desire perverted their judgment, as it still does in the case of their descendants, who come to believe according to their wishes, and call evil good, and good evil.

From this account, it appears that our first parents were guilty of sin in their hearts, before they committed it with their hands ; and that the eating of the forbidden fruit was only the outward expression of the vitiated state of their minds. The desire of knowledge by unlawful means, being indulged, disordered their whole moral constitution ; and they had already rebelled against God, before they openly violated his law. “ Lust,” or desire, “ when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” *

Although this account of the origin of moral evil should not be deemed satisfactory, it is certain that our first parents did break the commandment of God. That the fault was entirely their own, and that God was in no sense the Author of their sin, will appear from the following observations, which are chiefly a repetition of what has been formerly stated.

First, God created man perfectly holy, with no defect, no weakness, no tendency to sin. Every power was conferred upon him which was necessary to enable him to maintain the rank, and to perform the duty assigned to him.

Secondly, God set before him the fittest motives to secure his obedience. He promised as its reward, eternal happiness to himself and his offspring ; he denounced death as the penalty of sin. The trial which he prescribed to him, was perfectly easy. The restraint imposed upon him, could hardly be considered as any restraint at all, surrounded as he was with the choice and abundant productions of paradise.

Thirdly, God did not withdraw, in the moment of danger, the ability with which he had furnished man for his duty. His holiness was unimpaired ; his faculties were continued in

* James i. 15.

their full vigour; no means were employed to darken his understanding, and to seduce his affections, except by the tempter. God was still present with him, to afford him assistance, if it was needed, and he should ask it; he did not abandon him till he actually sinned.

If we attend to these observations, we shall perceive that the fall of man was entirely owing to himself. That God could have so strengthened him, that he should have been invincible, is certain; but, as he had already imparted to him sufficient strength, there is not the slightest ground for thinking, that he was bound to give him more. Had Adam exerted the power which he possessed, he would have stood. God had done all for him, which either justice or goodness required him to do; the failure was wholly on his part. His fall was the consequence, not of want of ability, but of an adventitious state of mind, which hindered him from exerting it.

I shall not take up your time with an attempt to shew, that by this single act, man transgressed all the precepts of the law, but shall leave this exercise of ingenuity to those who can find entertainment in it, and think that it will serve some valuable purpose. I would remind you, however, of the words of the Apostle James, that he who "offends in one point, is guilty of all." His meaning is, not that he is guilty of a formal breach of every commandment, but that he virtually subverts the whole law, by rebelling against the authority upon which it is founded. The words are obviously applicable to the first sin. It was the revolt of man from his Creator. It was an explicit declaration, that he would no longer be subject to him, that his own will was his law, and that, instead of submitting to divine guidance and control, he would walk according to the sight of his eyes, and the desires of his heart. It was an avowed insurrection against the supremacy of God, and an attempt to establish a separate and independent dominion upon earth; to wrest the sceptre from the hands of the Almighty, and commit it to the erring reason and wayward passions of his creatures. Trifling, therefore, as the act may seem to the thoughtless and profane, it implied all the guilt of the most daring impiety, and merited the dreadful punishment which ensued.

The immediate consequences of the fall, in relation to our first parents, are detailed in the narrative of Moses. First, "their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked." * The fact, that their bodies were without covering, they knew before; and the opening of their eyes, and their knowing that they were naked, must mean something different. The result of eating the forbidden fruit was not the acquisition of supernatural wisdom, as they fondly hoped; but a discovery that they had reduced themselves to a wretched and unprotected condition, being divested of original righteousness, and exposed to the wrath of their Maker. Hence they covered themselves with fig-leaves, and hid themselves among the trees of the garden, that he might not find them out. That Moses does not mean bodily nakedness, may be inferred from the words of Adam, who says not, 'I was ashamed,' but "I was afraid, because I was naked." The nakedness which gave rise to fear, must have been the nakedness of the soul. Our first parents were conscious of guilt, and wished to avoid a meeting with their Judge.—Secondly, they were summoned into his presence, and the sentence was pronounced upon them, by which they were subjected to all the miseries of life, and finally to death: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." †—Lastly, they were expelled from paradise, a place too sacred and delightful to be the abode of the guilty; and sent into the wide world, now cursed for their sake, in which toil and trouble awaited them: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." ‡

God seemed to threaten Adam with immediate death as the punishment of sin: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." || As he did not die on that day, we must conclude, either that the execution was delayed in the

* Gen. iii. 7.

† Ib. iii. 19.

‡ Ib. iii. 22—24.

|| Ib. ii. 17.

exercise of Divine patience, or that the apparent was not the real meaning of the sentence. It may import, that as soon as he transgressed, he should become mortal ; and in this sense he did immediately die. He was dead in law ; the seeds of mortality were sown in his constitution ; a change took place in his body preparatory to its ultimate dissolution. It was now subject to internal disorders, and external injuries ; it was exposed to the wasting influence of the elements ; it was doomed to decline in vigour and activity, to feel the infirmities of old age, and at last to sink into the grave. At the same time, his mind was disturbed with fear hitherto unknown ; and the awful prospect of the termination of his earthly career aggravated the other evils which he suffered, and embittered his remaining pleasures. He lost all hope of the happiness, which would have been the reward of his obedience, and would have consisted in the enjoyment of endless life and felicity. His right to it depended upon his fulfilling the terms of the covenant ; and as he failed to fulfil them, he had no claim to the promise. That noble prize, which would have blessed him and his posterity through the ages of eternity, was for ever forfeited. He fell under the curse ; and being unable to extricate himself from its power, he was still less capable of regaining, by his utmost exertions, the immense reward which, having been once rejected, would not be offered again. He was ejected from paradise, that he might not, with presumptuous hand, pluck the fruit of the tree of life, the symbol and seal of immortality. In the day of his transgression, he underwent spiritual death. His sin shed its baneful influence over his soul, and, in a moment, turned its beauty into deformity. Such was the constitution under which he was placed, and such was the nature of things, that the image of God must either be preserved entire, or be totally lost. The moment that the principle of rebellion was admitted, the principle of obedience was expelled ; as soon as he began to love earthly things, the love of God was extinguished. When the tie was broken which connected him with his Maker, from whom those influences proceeded, which inspired and sustained his moral excellence, his holy dispositions withered and died, like the verdure of a tree plucked up by the roots. Nothing re-

mained but his natural faculties, weakened and corrupted ; a darkened understanding, a wayward will, sensual appetites, and irregular affections. The change was sudden, but it was complete. Human nature was essentially the same, but it was divested of its brightest ornaments. All its glory was gone, and it was now poor, miserable, and disgusting ; an object from which he, who had lately pronounced it to be good, turned away his eyes with abhorrence.

Such were the effects of the fall upon our first parents, but they did not terminate upon them. Adam, as we shall see in our next lecture, was the federal head of the human race ; and as his obedience would have ensured the happiness of all his descendants, so his transgression involved them all in guilt and perdition. The fountain being polluted, the stream which flows from it is impure ; the tree being corrupt, the fruit which it bears is also corrupt. It is owing to his sin that death has ever since been making havock of mankind, and sweeping one generation after another into the grave ; it is owing to his sin that holiness has been banished from the earth, and crimes and miseries have been multiplied from age to age ; it is owing to his sin that myriads of beings, capable of immortal felicity and endless improvement, have been lost, and are doomed to spend an interminable existence in sorrow and despair : “ By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” *—Some of the topics which have now been slightly sketched, will be resumed and illustrated at greater length in the subsequent lectures.

* Rom. v. 12.

LECTURE XLV.

ON THE FALL OF MAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

COVENANT OF WORKS.—DEFINITION OF A COVENANT.—SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE OF THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND OUR FIRST PARENT.—THE PARTIES TO IT, GOD AND ADAM.—ADAM AS THE FEDERAL HEAD OF THE HUMAN RACE.—THE CONDITION OF THE COVENANT, OBEDIENCE.—ITS EXTENT.

IN the preceding Lecture, I made some observations upon the test of obedience which was prescribed to our first parent, when he was forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; from which it appeared, that the transaction between him and his Maker was of a federal nature. But the subject holds such an important place in religion, and in systems of Theology, that it must not be slightly passed over, and I purpose, therefore, to devote this lecture to a more ample illustration of it.

A covenant is often defined to be an agreement between two parties upon certain terms, and comprehends a promise made by the one to the other, accompanied with a condition which the other accepts, and upon the performance of which he becomes entitled to the promise. Some add a penalty, if either of the parties be fallible; but it is not essential, and may be omitted, as it is in those covenants between man and man, in which the only consequence of a failure on the part of the person, who had engaged to perform a particular service, is, that he loses the stipulated reward; but this cannot

properly be denominated a penalty. In the case before us, however, a penalty was subjoined ; because, man being under the highest obligations to obey the will of his Creator, justice would not permit him, in the event of transgression, to escape with impunity.

The Covenant of Works has been defined to be, a convention between God and man concerning the method of obtaining eternal happiness, accompanied with a threatening of death in the case of disobedience ; or the covenant which God made with Adam as the representative of his posterity, and in which he promised eternal life upon the condition of obedience, not only to the moral law written on his heart, but to the positive precept respecting the tree of knowledge. It is called the Covenant of Nature, because it was entered into with man while he was in his natural state, which was a state of innocence. It is called the Covenant of Life, because life was promised ; but improperly, I apprehend, since this designation does not express its peculiar character, and points out no distinction between it and the Covenant of Grace, the same blessing being promised in both. It is more commonly called the Covenant of Works, and this denomination is evidently appropriate ; shewing us at once what is its nature, and in what respect it differs from the other covenant, which bestows its reward not upon him who works, but upon him who believes.

It has been objected, that there is no mention of a covenant of works either in Genesis, or in any other passage of Scripture. Whether this be strictly true, we shall afterwards see ; but in the meantime, we observe that, although the words should not be used, yet, if the thing intended by them is virtually taught, there is no good reason against a phrase, by which it is conveniently and intelligibly expressed. It is necessary for clearness and expedition, to adopt compendious modes of speech which are understood by all parties. We read the Scriptures, not merely to learn the words, but to collect the sense ; and when we clothe it in a different dress, if it is faithfully represented, although the words are human, the sentiment is divine. It is objected, that the transaction with Adam could not be federal ; because, in a covenant, it is required that both parties should be free and independent,

having power to give, or to withhold their consent ; but that Adam, being a creature, had no choice, and was bound to acquiesce in the will of his Creator. Hence it has been thought, that it ought to be considered rather as a law than as a covenant. It is acknowledged that the qualification mentioned is necessary in a human covenant, or that the parties should be *sui juris*, and stipulate with perfect liberty ; and that a condition imposed upon a person against his will would not be obligatory in law. But, although Adam was not at liberty to accept or reject as he might please, yet he freely gave his consent, as we may presume from the state of his mind, which recognized no law but the command of his Maker ; and he came under a voluntary engagement to yield obedience to the precept enjoined, and to obey for the specific purpose of obtaining the reward, and avoiding the penalty. The transaction was federal on the part of God, as he proposed a condition, sanctioned with a promise and a threatening ; and on the part of Adam, as he pledged himself to fulfil the condition.

I formerly stated, that in this transaction there are found all the parts of a covenant. There were two parties, God and Adam. We shall afterwards have an opportunity to shew, in what light both should be considered. There was a condition, consisting in obedience to the positive precept, which God was pleased to issue for the trial of man's fidelity. There was a threatening, although there have been different opinions respecting its import, or in what extent the term death, should be understood. There was a promise, not distinctly expressed, but implied in the threatening ; for, if death was to be the consequence of sin, it clearly follows, that life was to be the reward of obedience. We cannot suppose, that a Being who delights in the happiness of his creatures would have placed man in such disadvantageous circumstances, that, while his transgression of the law would subject him to the greatest evil, no positive benefit would result from the most exact performance of his duty. He loves righteousness as much as he hates iniquity ; and although there can be no merit in the best exercise of those faculties which are his free gifts, and are sustained by the

continual care of his Providence, yet it would not have been consistent with his infinite goodness to have required man to serve him for nought. I may add, that our Saviour seems to refer to the original promise, when he says, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;"* intimating that there was a reward, according to the divine constitution, as well as a penalty. It is supposed also, in the reasonings concerning the impossibility of justification by works in consequence of human guilt and depravity, that it is owing to his inability to fulfil the terms, that man cannot obtain eternal happiness by the law.

From these observations it appears, that we are warranted to maintain, that there was a federal transaction between God and our first parent, and that, from its nature, it is fitly designated the covenant of works. We may even allege, for the use of such language, the authority of Scripture. In Hosea vi. 7, we read, "But they like men have transgressed the covenant; there have they dealt treacherously against me." On consulting the original, we find this to be the literal version, "they, *כֹּאֲדָם* like *Adam*, have transgressed the covenant." The same Hebrew phrase occurs in Job xxxi. 33. "If I covered my transgression, *כֹּאֲדָם* like *Adam*, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom;" and in Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7, "I have said ye are Gods, and all of you children of the Most High; but ye shall die like men," *כֹּאֲדָם* like *Adam*. The comparison in these two last is natural and impressive. The descendants of the first man imitate him in attempting to deny or palliate their sin; and the mortality to which he was subjected has descended to them as their inheritance: the most exalted station furnishes no exception; the monarch dies like him, as well as the beggar. The resemblance is equally striking in the first passage, and there appears no reason against considering it as referring to the conduct of Adam, in violating his fidelity to his Maker. This is called the "transgression of the covenant," which obviously teaches, that a covenant was made with him. Although the term is not used, the thing is intended by the Apostle, when he makes mention of the law of works, and the law of faith. The former is

* Matth. xix. 17.

the law, which promised life upon the condition of works ; and what is this but a covenant ? as the latter is the covenant of grace revealed in the Gospel, which freely promises it to believers. But the word is supposed to occur in that well known passage of the Epistle to the Galatians, where it is said, " These are the two covenants." * The meaning, however, is so doubtful, that the propriety of founding an argument upon it is questionable. The law from Sinai had some appearance of being a republication of the covenant of works, preparatory to the ceremonial institution, which prefigured the great atonement for sin ; but to suppose, as some have done, that the Israelites in their national capacity are under that covenant, would exclude them from being the church, which can subsist only under a dispensation of the covenant of grace. When the Apostle says, that the law from Sinai " gendered to bondage," he may speak of it according to the ideas of the carnal Jews, who looked upon it as a covenant of works, by obedience to which they were to obtain righteousness and life ; or he may refer to the terrors with which it was accompanied, to the minuteness and multiplicity of its precepts, which there was every moment a danger of transgressing, and to its partial revelation of grace, the way into the holiest of all being not yet made manifest. In this uncertainty, we cannot safely appeal to this passage as a decisive authority for calling the transaction with our first parent, a covenant. There would be still greater impropriety in quoting the Epistle to the Hebrews, † in which mention is made of two covenants, the old and the new. It would betray great ignorance, indeed, to suppose the one to be the covenant of works, and the other, the covenant of grace. The term, covenant, is used in a variety of senses, and in the present case signifies a dispensation of religion. The old covenant is the dispensation of Moses, the dispensation of types and figures ; the new covenant is the dispensation of the Gospel. " The law was given by Moses ; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." ‡

In every covenant, there must be parties, and here we have two, God and Adam. God prescribed the condition,

* Gal. iv. 24.

† Heb. viii.

‡ John i. 17.

and connected with it a promise and a threatening, and Adam, with due submission and thankfulness, consented.

God must be considered, in the first place, as the Creator and Sovereign Lord, possessed of a right to require the service of his creature, in whatever way and form his wisdom might determine. His authority was unlimited; unlimited, I mean, in respect of Adam, who was at the absolute disposal of the Author of his being, and had no independent rights which his Maker was bound to respect. God could do any thing to him personally, and with a view to his posterity, which was consistent with his own perfections. He is a law to himself, that is, he is uncontrolled by any external cause, and acts according to his own will; but his will is not arbitrary; it is always in harmony with all the attributes of his nature. What he required from Adam was due to him, in consequence of the relation of the creature to the Creator; for it is evident, that he who is endowed with intellectual and moral powers by another, is under the strongest obligation to employ them according to the pleasure of the giver. The particular mode in which obedience was enjoined, is not liable to objection, as we formerly shewed. If it appeared to Divine wisdom to be a proper test, it is enough; and it is also manifest to us, that it was well adapted to answer the design. It made obedience hinge upon the authority of God alone, independently of any perception of fitness in the command itself; and this is its true foundation. The duty prescribed presented no formidable difficulty, but was remarkable for its easiness, and it was attended with no particular temptation to transgress. No person who considers the circumstances, can for a moment imagine that, in proposing this trial, there was a tyrannical exercise of authority, or any design unfriendly to the interests of men. God did what he had a right to do; but he imposed no burden which Adam was unable to bear.

In the second place, We must consider God as willing to communicate happiness to man. This appears from the nature of the transaction. A trial was made of his obedience; but the ultimate design, in subordination to the Divine glory, was his establishment in a state of innocence and enjoyment. God could have made him happy without entering into covenant

with him ; but, by adopting this plan, it was put in his power to secure his happiness, by acquiring a right to it ; a right founded upon stipulation, or upon the promise. There is not a greater mistake than to imagine, that the actions of creatures are intrinsically meritorious. They are not profitable to God ; they are not gratuitous ; they were previously due, are performed by power which God has freely bestowed, and consequently, give no claim to a reward. The highest creature, after ages of affectionate and universal obedience, has not laid his Creator under any obligation. If no covenant had been made, although Adam had gone through a long course of obedience without a single failure, he would have had no title to a recompence, and no injustice would have been done to him if he had been annihilated. I do not say, if he had been subjected to sufferings ; because, according to our ideas of equity, punishment should be inflicted upon the guilty alone ; but merit being impossible, and no promise having been given, it would not have been unjust to have reduced him to a state of nonentity. It is, therefore, a proof of the goodness of God, that, by making a covenant with our first parent, he gave him an opportunity to secure a blessed and immortal life, and to secure it to his posterity as well as to himself. It is no objection, that the issue has been different, unless it can be shewn, that the failure of the plan was owing to its inadaptation to the nature and circumstances of man. But there is no ground for such a charge. The condition was easy ; Adam was possessed of intellectual and moral powers, in full vigour and activity, and had the most powerful motive to obedience in the consideration, that the everlasting well-being of himself and all his descendants, depended upon his conduct.

Candour requires me to add, that we are not competent fully to assign the reasons of this dispensation. After the most mature consideration of the subject, it appears mysterious that God should have placed our first parent in such circumstances, that while he might insure, he might forfeit, his own happiness and that of millions of beings who were to spring from his loins. We cannot tell why he adopted this plan with us and not with the angels, each of whom

was left to stand or fall for himself. We know that the result has been another dispensation, by which the highest glory has redounded to God, and a part of the human race will be redeemed from sin and suffering ; but we cannot venture to affirm, that the first covenant was intended to pave the way for the second, without being liable to be charged with believing, that God did not design the happiness of man by the first covenant, and, consequently, that there was no goodness in making it ; and that, in opposition to a law which he has prescribed to us, he did evil that good might come. Instead of speculating upon such high matters, and pretending to explain them by reasoning which does not satisfy the mind, we should endeavour to repress our doubts, and calm our murmurings, by the reflection that such was the will of God, and his will is right. “ How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” *

I have been unavoidably led to anticipate some things, which properly belong to the next branch of the subject, under which we are to speak of man as the other party in the covenant, and to inquire in what light he should be viewed.

First, He must be considered as a subject of the Divine government, having no right to appoint his own service, and no choice respecting the mode of being made happy, and bound to acquiesce in the will of his Maker. The proposal of terms, demanded his unhesitating acceptance. This was his duty ; he was free from constraint, but not from moral obligation. In this sense the covenant may be called a law, because it was accompanied with authority which could not be declined without open rebellion.

In the second place, We must consider him as not only bound to give his consent, but as willing, in consequence of the rectitude of his nature, and from this rectitude, possessed of the requisite ability for the fulfilment of the condition. He did not enter into the covenant by compulsion, but with perfect freedom, because, whatever seemed right to his Creator, seemed right also to him ; and he entertained no doubt, that as the constitution was agreeable to justice, so it was calculated to advance the interests of himself and his

* Rom. xi. 33.

posterity. He accepted the terms with joy, and was thankful to God, who dealt with him, not as an absolute Sovereign, but as a Benefactor and a Friend. That he was a proper person to be a party in this transaction, will, I presume, be readily acknowledged. None of his posterity would have been better qualified. He did not, indeed, enjoy the advantage of experience; but the want of it was more than compensated by the perfect knowledge of his duty, and the perfect harmony which subsisted between his will and affections, and the dictates of conscience. There was no ignorance or infirmity exposing him to the hazard of being misled or overcome, but his mind was full of light, and his heart of love.

But the character in which he ought to be chiefly considered, is that of a representative, or federal head, of those who were to spring from his loins. His being a federal head, is very different from his being a natural head. He was the natural head of the human race, as the first man, from whom all other men were to proceed, according to the law of generation; but this relation is not the ground on which his actions were imputable to his posterity. I am disposed to think that the reasonings of some Theologians on this subject are inaccurate, while they account for the present state of human nature upon the simple principle of transmission; maintaining, that as a tree propagates its kind, or produces a tree like itself, so Adam conveyed his own dispositions to his offspring. This is to account for a moral phenomenon by a physical law. Difficulties meet us in the doctrine of representation; but, if it be admitted to be true, then imputation is seen to be consonant to justice. It is impossible, I think, to reconcile with justice the idea, that all men are involved in sin merely because their first father happened to be a sinner, just as children frequently exhibit the features of their parents. We cannot conceive that, in this case, any demerit could attach to his descendants, or that they could be punished except by arbitrary will. It appears more agreeable to reason, to conceive that, if Adam had been only our natural head, he would have communicated the same nature to us which he received from his Creator, whatever might have befallen himself; because, on this supposition, we

should have had no concern in his sin, any more than we are chargeable with the sins of our immediate parents. In the natural world, a corrupt tree may bring forth corrupt fruit, the scion may have all the bad qualities of the parent stock; but in the moral world, individuals are originally independent, and stand or fall with one another only in consequence of some new constitution, which has given them a legal and moral identity. We say, therefore, that Adam was not only the natural, but the federal, head of his children.

Here we encounter opposition. That Adam was the federal head of his posterity, is denied by Pelagians and Socinians, who maintain that he acted for himself alone, and that the effects of his fall terminated upon himself. Arminians admit that the whole human race is injured by the first sin, but at the same time controvert the proposition, that Adam was their proper representative. All are expelled from paradise as well as Adam and Eve; women bring forth children with pain; men earn their bread with the sweat of their brows, and all are subjected to death. But death is not properly a punishment, for it cannot be that the innocent should be punished for the sin of another; it is a natural necessity of dying, derived from Adam, on whom this penalty was denounced. He could not procreate children, in respect of their condition, happier than himself. They are unavoidably exposed to the same evils, as a father who was once rich, and has been deprived of his property for his crimes, begets children who are poor, but who, if he had not sinned, would have inherited his wealth; not that the children suffer the punishment of their fathers, but experience the operation of a law of nature, according to which a person cannot transmit to others, good things which he does not himself possess. These are their views, as stated by Limborch, * who further maintains, that Adam can be considered as the representative of his posterity, only in the same sense in which this may be affirmed of any head of a family, any progenitor of a race; and expressly denies that a covenant was made with him in our name.

Here the objections against considering Adam simply as our natural head, which were formerly mentioned, ought to

* Limborchii Theol. Christ. lib. iii. cap. 3.

be recollected. These men are willing to admit that, in consequence of the fall of our first parent, we are subjected to many temporal evils, and even that men are born less pure than he was, and with a certain inclination to sin; but they see an insuperable difficulty in the idea that he was the representative of his descendants, for how could he be such without their consent? It may be truly said that they strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel; for surely it is less repugnant to reason and justice, that we should suffer through Adam, because we were legally connected with him, and he acted in our name, than that we should suffer solely because we derive our being from him by generation, although we had no concern in his sin. In the one case, although we may not fully understand the principle on which he was constituted our representative, we perceive a legal ground on which guilt is imputed to us; but in the other, we cannot discover any just cause that any share of the fatal effects of his transgression should fall to our lot. It strengthens the argument, that, according to Arminians, not our physical but our moral state is deteriorated, for we are born less pure; which, if it has any meaning, must signify that we are at least in some degree polluted; and we have a natural inclination to sin, which, in spite of all evasions, must be itself sinful. In plain language, we have become depraved and miserable, without any good reason; our present state is not our crime, but our misfortune. They exclaim against our doctrine, as making God the author of sin, but the odious consequence flows more directly from their own. To pretend that, although death and other temporal evils have come upon us through the sin of Adam, yet these are not to be regarded as a punishment, is neither more nor less than to say,—‘They must not be called a punishment, because this would not agree with our system. If we should concede that they are a punishment, we should be compelled to admit that the sin of the first man is imputed to his posterity, and that he was their federal head. We deny, therefore, that the labours and sorrows of the present life, the loss of such joys as are left to us at its close, and the dreadful agonies and terrors with which death is often attended, have the nature of a penalty.’

In the same manner, a man may call black white, and bitter sweet, because it will serve his purpose ; but he would be the veriest simpleton who should believe him. If our antagonists will change the meaning of words, they cannot alter the nature of things. Pain and death are evils, and when inflicted by the hand of a just God, must be punishments ; for although the innocent may be harassed and destroyed by the arbitrary exercise of human power, none but the guilty suffer under His administration.

These observations will assist us in establishing the point under consideration. That Adam was the federal head of his posterity, we may confidently infer from the fact, that the effects of his sin extend to all his offspring without exception. It has been said, indeed, that in the record of the transaction, no mention is made of his posterity, and the words of the threatening are addressed exclusively to him. But there is little force in this objection. If we attend to the history of our first parents in paradise, we shall find, that several things were said to them, in which, although there is no explicit reference to their posterity, they are evidently comprehended. When God said, “ Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,”* no person supposes that the command, or rather the promise in the form of an injunction, was restricted to Adam and Eve, it being acknowledged on all hands, that it respected their descendants, and that the propagation of the human species ever since is the consequence of it. The words, “ Behold I have given you the herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree on the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat,”† were not spoken to them alone, but were a gift of the productions of the soil to their successors in all ages. To come more closely to the subject, the threatening, “ In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,”‡ was addressed in the first instance to Adam alone, but certainly was not intended to be limited to him, as is evident from its execution upon his children. Hence the sentence pronounced upon Adam, “ Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,”|| must be viewed as a sentence upon all who, in virtue of it, suffer death and dissolution

* Gen. i. 28. † Ib. 29. ‡ Ib. ii. 17. || Ib. iii. 19.

in the grave. Again, no person will say, that the curse respected the original transgressor alone, although there is not a hint that it would light upon others. Every man who looks upon our fields, and observes the labour which is necessary to cultivate them; every man who toils from morning to night in order to procure subsistence for himself and his family, will be compelled by painful experience to acknowledge, that the denunciation retains its force in this distant age of the world. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.—In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground."*

These observations may fully satisfy us, that it is not a valid objection against the representative character of Adam, that he was addressed as an individual, and no direct notice is taken of his descendants. The extension of the effects of his fall to those who have sprung from him, in the long succession of almost six thousand years, is a proof which cannot be fairly resisted, that he did not fall alone. Upon any other hypothesis, we cannot make sense of such declarations as the following, and we have seen how contrary to sound reason and Scripture are the attempts to explain them away. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."† "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."‡ "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."§ "In Adam all died."§ When mention is made of the first and second Adam, and the one is called the figure of the other, there must be a resemblance between them; and in what does it consist? In every respect but one, they are dissimilar. "The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."¶ The first man entailed guilt and death as the fatal inheritance of his children; the Second Man communicates righteousness and life. The contrast is stated at considerable length by Paul, in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. But the first Adam was a figure of the second, if he was a public person, a federal head. On this supposition we perceive the resemblance; but it fails if there

* Gen. iii. 17, 19. † Rom. v. 19. ‡ Ib. 18. || Ib. 12.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 22. ¶ Ib. 47.

was no covenant with our great progenitor, and the words of Scripture convey a false idea. Jesus Christ, who was the Surety of sinners, might be with propriety called the Second Adam, if the first Adam was the representative of his seed; but if there was no legal relation between him and them, the appellation is not founded on truth.

I have endeavoured to prove the fact, but I do not pretend fully to explain it. President Edwards, in his book on Original Sin, which is an admirable work, and one of the ablest and most triumphant refutations of error which is to be found in our language, in answering the objection, that to deal with Adam and his posterity as one, was to act contrarily to truth, because they were not one but distinct, enters into a long dissertation upon the subject of identity. He shows that the identity of creatures is not an absolute, independent identity, like that of the Creator, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, but a dependent identity founded on an arbitrary constitution. It is owing to this constitution, that an old tree is the same with the seedling which sprung from the soil some hundred years before, and that the human body, which undergoes innumerable changes, is the same in old age and in infancy. To the same cause we must attribute the identity of all created beings, for they do not exist now, because they existed the last moment, as if nature went on in its course mechanically, or by its intrinsic power; but their preservation is equivalent to a continued creation. In the same way we explain the identity of the soul, and its uninterrupted consciousness; it being impossible to assign any satisfactory reason, why a man is conscious that he is the being that he was forty years ago, but the divine constitution. The conclusion which he draws from these premises is, that the objection, which maintains that to consider Adam and his posterity as one was contrary to truth, is built upon a false hypothesis; because it is a divine constitution, which makes truth in all matters of identity. But, with the leave of this great man, the cases are not analogous. In the case of created beings in general, identity is their continued existence; but in the case before us, it is the conjunction of separate beings by a legal union, which affects their moral state and final destiny. It is

evidently a different thing to prolong the existence of a creature, and give it a consciousness of being the same at successive periods, from the connecting of many individuals together, so as to identify their actions and interests. The one is a physical, and the other a moral union, and therefore the one does not serve in any degree to illustrate the other. The difficulty remains as it was. The question is not about the power, but about the justice of God, not what he could do, but what it was consistent with his character to do ; and the result of this metaphysical inquiry into identity is to prove, what we understood as well before, that the oneness of Adam and his posterity was founded on the will of God. What we wish to know is, how this constitution can be reconciled with his righteousness and goodness ; but it throws no light upon this subject to inform us, that the power which established identity in natural things, so associated Adam and his seed that they were to stand or to fall together. When we are asking, whether it was right in God to do so, we cannot be satisfied by being told that he was able to do it. It is undoubtedly enough that God has willed any thing, because it is certain, that he never wills what is unwise or unjust ; but when our reasonings end in this point, we have unquestionably failed, if we set out with a professed design to solve the objections of infidelity, and to settle the wavering judgment on the basis of conviction.

The condition of the covenant was obedience to the law under which man was placed, and it is called the condition, because his right to the enjoyment of life was suspended upon it. The only precept mentioned in the narrative of Moses, is that which relates to the tree of knowledge. If he abstained from its fruit he should live, if he tasted it he should die. But if we consider, that the positive precept was given merely to make trial of Adam, we shall be convinced that his obedience was not limited to it, or, in other words, that it was not the only duty enjoined upon him. The moral law was not suspended, and this new precept substituted in its room, so that, in all other respects, he was for a time at liberty to do what he pleased. That law is immutable in its obligations, being founded on the nature and relations of God and man ;

and it is impossible, therefore, that a creature should, by any dispensation, be exempted from its authority for a single moment. It was written upon the heart of man at his creation, and remained there under this new arrangement, in characters as distinct and impressive as ever. But the precept concerning the tree of knowledge was properly the condition, because it was by it that man's respect to the authority which had enacted the whole law was to be tried. I shall not repeat what was formerly said concerning its fitness to answer the design. Adam was considered as a subject of the Divine government, and as a holy creature capable of performing any duty which his Maker should be pleased to enjoin. He possessed in full vigour the principle of obedience, and would not feel any duty to be burdensome, and still less one so easy in performance.

It has been asked, Would the covenant have been broken by the transgression of any other precept of the law? We must answer in the affirmative, if the design of the positive precept was, to make trial of the obedience of Adam, for he would have been equally unworthy of happiness, and deserving of punishment, if he had renounced the authority of God in any other instance. The alienation of his heart from God would have been the same. The positive precept was not more sacred than the other precepts of the law. There is no sufficient ground for a positive affirmation; but it is possible, that this was the only precept in respect of which Adam was in danger of failing. As it was the proposed test of his obedience, it might be that here only he was left to himself. It is easy to conceive the Divine power to have guarded him against transgressing in any other matter. There is no absurdity in supposing that, while he was vulnerable in this point, he was defended every where else, against the assaults of the enemy; and that in this manner it was secured, that the precept relative to the tree of knowledge should prove, what it seems to have been intended to be, the only test of his allegiance to his Creator. This was the only particular about which there might arise a contest of his will with the will of God. I merely throw out this hint for consideration; but, if there is any truth in it, we get

rid of the curious but useless inquiry, What would have been the consequence, if Adam had religiously abstained from the forbidden fruit, but had committed some other transgression ?

In some systems, the condition of the covenant is said to have been perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience ; but this statement is far from being accurate. I do not deny, that it required perfect obedience in the sense already explained. The whole law was concentrated in a single positive precept, which put to the proof the principle upon which all obedience depends, profound submission to the authority of the Lawgiver ; but if perfect is here used to signify universal in extent, as well as pure in motive, the obedience prescribed in the covenant was only perfect constructively. Adam had not to go through a course of all the duties, but to evince that he was ready to perform them as opportunity should occur, by attending to this particular duty. I grant also, that the obedience was personal, or, in other words, was to be performed by himself ; but as no doubt ever did, or ever could, arise in any mind upon this point, it was altogether unnecessary to mention it. This is a truism ; we cannot controvert it, but we deem it unworthy of notice, because it does not convey one particle of information. No person ever dreamed that Adam might have employed a substitute, or that he might have performed one part, and committed what remained to another. It is superfluous to say, that the condition was personal obedience. I deny also that it was perpetual obedience. The period of probation was not to be commensurate with his existence, nor indefinitely extended ; there was a time fixed when the trial would end, and the reward would be conferred. To say that the obedience was to be perpetual, is contrary to the nature of a covenant, for in every transaction of this kind it is implied, that, when the stipulated service is finished, the promise will be fulfilled. But, when the term perpetual comes to be explained, we find that it does not signify perpetual, but temporary, and is employed to teach us that Adam was to continue to obey till the trial was ended. But why is a word used, which suggests an idea contrary to truth, and different from what the speaker or writer intended ? Why should that be called perpetual, which would have probably

terminated in a few days or weeks? Besides, if the meaning is, that man was bound to obey during the term prescribed, this notion is implied in the word perfect, for that obedience only is perfect which is sustained as long as the obligation to perform it lasts. Here, then, we have an instance of repetition, under the name of distinction.

I have dwelt longer upon this account of the condition of the covenant than was perhaps necessary, because it is frequently met with, and may be adopted without examination. The words perfect, personal, and perpetual, have been sounded in our ears from our infancy, and we may repeat them without stopping to inquire, whether they have been selected with judgment, and give a true representation of the case.

Obedience was previously due by our first parent to his Maker, upon whom he was physically and morally dependent. It is implied in the just conception of a creature, that, as he holds life and all his faculties from his Creator, he is bound to live for him alone; and that, after having done all that is possible with his powers and in his circumstances, he is an unprofitable servant. His Creator has gained nothing by his services, and consequently owes him no recompence. Hence it appears that, in the actions of a perfect human being, there could be no intrinsic merit; that no claim could be founded on the real value of the actions; that there was no proportion between their worth and a reward, which it behoved justice to recognise. They therefore greatly err, who maintain, that the obedience of Adam would on its own account have entitled him to happiness. The merit of condignity, as it has been called, exists only in the dreams of Papists, and men like them, who forget that God cannot become a debtor to his creatures, but in consequence of his free and gracious engagement. But there may be such a thing as pactional or conventional merit, that is, merit arising not from the natural worth of the actions of creatures, but from a voluntary stipulation, by which God, independent and all-sufficient, has agreed to consider their obedience as a reason why he should bestow new benefits upon them. This was the only merit of which Adam was capable. God put it in his power to acquire a conventional right to life. If he had performed the

condition, he might have claimed it, not with the boldness which one man may use in demanding the fulfilment of a bargain by another, because he has law and justice on his side, but with an humble sense that in himself he deserved nothing, yet with full confidence in the Divine faithfulness and goodness. There would have been no ground for self-gratulation or exultation; but there would have been ground for admiring and praising the liberality of his Maker, who had bestowed an immense reward for services which he might have exacted without making any return; and here we should remember and apply the words of the Apostle, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God." * In his presence, they who never sinned, as well as they who have been redeemed by grace, must cast down their crowns, and acknowledge that they have nothing but what they have received.

The obedience of Adam would have been considered as virtually the obedience of his posterity, for he would have performed it, not in a private, but in a public capacity. I do not mean, that God would have viewed his posterity as having actually obeyed, any more than that, when he justifies believers in Christ, he views them as having personally fulfilled the righteousness of the law. But what had been done by the common representative of the human race, would have been reckoned or imputed to them; so that, by the same act, their happiness and his would have been secured. If God had said to him, "Live, for thou hast faithfully obeyed my command," he would have said at the same time, "All thy descendants shall live." They would have come into existence pure and happy, and would have continued in this state without danger, or the possibility of a change. But, let it not be supposed, that they would have been released from an obligation to personal obedience. Adam himself would not have been released from it. All men would have been bound to fulfil the will of God throughout their whole duration; but obedience would not have been the condition on which their hopes were suspended. It would have been the willing and affectionate recognition of his authority, and an expression of their gratitude for his infinite goodness, in giving them existence, and making it blessed.

* Rom. iv. 2.

LECTURE XLVI.

ON THE FALL OF MAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

PENALTY OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS, DEATH, TEMPORAL, SPIRITUAL,
AND ETERNAL.—PROMISE OF THE COVENANT.—SEALS OF THE COVE-
NANT.

HAVING considered the parties in the covenant, and the condition, I should proceed to the promise, which is next in the natural order, and is the only part remaining to complete a federal transaction. A penalty, I formerly remarked, is not essential, as covenants may be conceived, and are sometimes made, the violation of which terminates simply in their abrogation; but in the present case, it arose from the nature of things, it being impossible that, if man transgressed the law of his Creator, and a law which he had come under a voluntary obligation to obey, he should be permitted to escape with impunity. As the promise is not mentioned in the original transaction, and is inferred from the penalty, it will be proper to begin with the latter: “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

The literal sense of this denunciation is so obvious, that one should have thought it impossible that there could be any dispute about it; but the perverseness of man has endeavoured to perplex every principle of religion, and has controverted, not only points which are obscure and mysterious, but the plainest declarations. If words can have a definite meaning, these import, that the death of the body was to be

the penalty of transgression ; but this has been denied. Pelagius, who rejected the doctrine of original sin, and held that the fall of Adam affected himself alone, found it necessary to reconcile the prevalence of death among his descendants with his system ; and hence he maintained, that even to Adam, death was not a punishment, but a natural effect resulting from his constitution. In other words, he was mortal from the beginning. He is represented by his contemporaries as having said, that Adam would have died, whether he had sinned or had not sinned, and that he died by a necessity of nature. Socinians, who have introduced almost every heresy into their creed, have adopted this opinion of Pelagius : “ All die by Adam,” says the founder of the sect, “ because he was mortal ; and for this reason, those who are born of him must also be mortal. The first man was taken from the earth, and was therefore earthy. This happened before the fall, and, therefore, before the fall his body was, by its own nature, liable to dissolution. Before he sinned, he had a body corruptible, vile, and infirm.” Human impudence cannot well go farther than, in this bold and undisguised manner, to contradict the express declaration of Scripture. When a person ventures to deny what is self-evident, we are at a loss how to proceed ; whether to reply to him, or to treat him with silent contempt. It may be sufficient, in the present case, to repeat the words of God to Adam, without quoting other passages in confirmation of their meaning : “ In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Can any thing be plainer, than that, if he did not eat, he should not die ? Can we suppose, that God threatened, as a consequence of transgression, what would take place in the course of nature ? that Adam was deterred from disobedience, by the annunciation of an event which would befall him, although he performed his duty ? If men will make themselves ridiculous, by venting opinions stamped with folly and absurdity, let them beware of exposing their Maker to contempt.

Arminians admit, that temporal death was, in a certain sense, the consequence of sin ; when Adam fell, he was laid under the necessity of dying. They hold, however, that his body was naturally frail and mortal ; but that he would have

continued to live, if he had obeyed his Creator. They choose to say, that we were laid under the necessity of dying, to intimate that he was not made mortal by sin, having been so from the beginning; but that after he sinned, death, which he would have escaped, if he had acted a dutiful part, was unavoidable. Upon this hypothesis, death cannot be strictly called a penalty, or new evil which owed its existence to sin, for Adam was naturally subject to it; but it assumed the form of a penalty, by being denounced as what would certainly take place, in case of disobedience. In a word, this is a proper commentary upon the threatening. ‘Thou art mortal by thy original constitution. I will prolong thy life, if thou retain thy integrity; but if thou transgress, the law of thy nature will be permitted to operate, and thou shalt return to the dust from whence thou wast taken.’ It is sufficient to say, that for this opinion there is not the slightest foundation in Scripture; that it is contrary to the natural import of the threatening, which suggests, that the evil denounced was a thing to which man was not previously liable; and that it differs from the sentiments which have been entertained by Christians in general, and by the Jews, if we may judge from the words of one of their ancient books: “God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil, came death into the world.”*

Dr Taylor of Norwich, who is an oracle among Divines of a certain description, has taken the liberty not only to wrest the Scriptures, but most manfully to contradict himself, so that his sentiments on this subject are a mass of confusion. He tells us, that “the sentence of death, of a general mortality, was pronounced upon mankind, in consequence of Adam’s first transgression;” that they are “made subject to death, by the judicial act of God;”† and yet he maintains that, in Scripture, “nothing is said to be imputed, reckoned, or accounted to any person for righteousness or condemnation, but the proper act or deed of that person.”‡ He affirms and denies: tells us that we are adjudged to death for the sin of

* *Wisd.* ii. 23, 24.

† *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, Part i.*

‡ *Ibid.* p. iii.

Adam, and tells us again, that we could not be adjudged to it, but for our personal sin. The truth is, that he did not believe original sin, but was led into this labyrinth by his insidious design to retain the phraseology of Scripture, while he explained away the meaning. That he did not consider death as the penalty of sin, is evident from his maintaining that it is a great benefit, and is intended to be such, as it increases the vanity of earthly things, and tends to excite sober reflection, to induce us to be moderate in gratifying the appetites of the body, and to mortify pride and ambition. Thus, by his magic touch, the curse is changed into a blessing ; and certainly, if, as Dr Taylor believed, we are not born guilty and polluted, it is necessary to account for the strange fact, that we are apparently treated as criminals ; and, since it is not very easy to do so in a satisfactory manner, to put on a bold face, and say, that it is quite a mistake to suppose that death is an evil, for it is designed solely for our good. It has been very properly asked, if this be the case, how does it come to pass that infants die, who can derive none of the alleged advantages from their mortality ? It is rather a puzzling question, which we shall leave the admirers of this Theologian to answer as they best can.

I have already taken notice of the opinion, that death befalls the posterity of Adam, as a natural inheritance, or that their mortality is not properly the punishment of his sin, but the consequence of his mortality ; and I shall not repeat the observations formerly made.

Temporal death is the dissolution of the union which subsists between the body and the soul. When the soul forsakes the body, the breath goes out ; the circulation of the blood ceases, with all the vital functions, and it becomes as inactive and insensible, as any piece of unorganized matter. Putrefaction commences, and, in process of time, its firmest parts, even the bones, are reduced to their original elements.

He who appoints the end, provides the means by which it will be accomplished. Death is not, in ordinary cases, the sudden rupture of the tie which binds together the two constituent parts of our nature. It is effected by a variety of causes, which, in a longer or shorter time, and with greater

or less violence, impair the strength, and derange the texture of the body, so that it ceases to be a fit habitation for the soul. As these causes are not accidental, but operate under the direction of Providence, which has fixed the manner and time of our death, as well as our death itself, they must be considered as included in the original sentence. Nothing, indeed, was mentioned in the threatening but death; but when God explained the import of the term, in his address to our first parents after the fall, he denounced sorrow, and toil, and a long train of outward troubles, to be closed by their return to the dust. The afflictions to which adults are subject may be viewed as the punishment of their personal transgressions, and are thus represented in the Scriptures; but the diseases and sufferings of infants cannot be accounted for in this way, as they are not capable of actual sin, and they must be the effect of their connexion with Adam. The body is affected by the elements; by vicissitudes of cold and heat; by the air which it breathes; by the rain and dew of heaven; by exhalations from the earth and the waters, which cause sickness, pain, debility, and decay. It is injured and worn out by the toil which is necessary to procure a subsistence; for the earth, cursed for our sake, spontaneously brings forth briars and thorns, but demands severe and patient labour as the price of its valuable fruits. The accidents which prove fatal to life could not be easily enumerated; the diseases of various names, which assail us by day and by night, form a long and melancholy list; and the dreadful visitations of earthquake, famine, and pestilence, which lay waste cities and provinces, are means by which the Almighty avenges the violation of his law. We may add to these evils, the anxiety, the fear, the disappointment, the regret, the foreboding apprehensions, which haunt the mind, and, in consequence of the intimate connexion between the soul and body, make the latter pine away, and sink into an untimely grave. When death entered into the world, these evils accompanied it. They are not distinct penalties, but ramifications of the one penalty incurred by the breach of the covenant. Man is dying from the moment of his birth; and as many of the human race are cut off almost as soon as they see the light, so it is but a sickly

life which is allotted to those whose time is prolonged ; a life always precarious, and which, being attended with pain and infirmity, reminds them that it will not last long, and that they are hastening to the house appointed for all living.

That temporal death is a penal evil, will be manifest from an attentive consideration of its nature. The death of a man is not like that of a vegetable, which, not having consciousness, does not enjoy existence ; nor like that of the lower animals, which, although sentient beings, having little recollection of the past, and no knowledge of the future, feel neither regret nor fear, and suffer merely the pain which terminates their life. Death is to us the loss of a possession which we highly value, and eagerly wish to retain, and the surrender of which is often attended with acute mental distress. Let us think of the situation of our first parent, and endeavour to enter into his ideas and feelings, and we shall perceive how dreadful an evil it is. He had received from the hand of his Creator, along with existence, so many blessings that nothing was wanting to his happiness ; and looking forward, he was gladdened by the prospect of endless ages of felicity, when suddenly his hopes vanished, and there opened to his view a short and troubled course, which would terminate in the abode of darkness and corruption. He must have trembled while the sentence was sounding in his ears, and for a time have been overwhelmed with despair. To his posterity, life does not present the same attractions ; but, fallen as is the value of the gift, it is still highly prized. “ All that a man hath will he give for his life.” To preserve it, is our constant care ; we submit to incessant labour, in order to procure the means of supporting it ; we summon others to assist us in repairing the injuries which it has sustained, and guarding it against danger ; the very thought of dissolution alarms us, and is admitted into the mind with reluctance, and sometimes we turn pale, and shudder at its name. We recoil from suffering ; but what would not a man undergo, rather than part with his life ? We confess, then, that death is an evil ; our feelings bear testimony to the truth, that it is a punishment of an awful kind. To be arrested in the midst of our career ; to be separated for ever from those whom we love ; to close our

eyes for the last time upon the light of the sun; to give up our joys and hopes with our parting sigh; this is the doom of man that is born of a woman; this is the sad inheritance which our great progenitor has bequeathed to us. Every circumstance bespeaks the wrath of God against the work of his hands. He destroys it as if it were loathsome in his sight. This is not the chastisement of a Father, but the vengeance of a Judge.

In this light we cannot but view temporal death, when considered simply as the extinction of the present life. But if we take into the account its consequences; if we reflect that the soul is not extinguished when the body dies, and after its separation is disposed of in some other state of being; and that he who goes out of this world under the curse, can have no reasonable expectation that his condition will be improved in the next; temporal death will be found a much more formidable evil than it appears to our senses. When a criminal has endured a capital punishment, he is beyond the operation of human laws, but the authority of the Divine law is commensurate with our being; and if the death of the body has not atoned for transgression, omniscient and omnipresent justice will still proceed against its victims.

“In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” The Hebrew expression is, “In dying thou shalt die.” There is no peculiar emphasis in it, as some have imagined, but it is a common idiom of the language, which conveys nothing more than the English phrase, “thou shalt die.” It seems to denounce the immediate execution of the threatening; but, as Adam was permitted to live after the fall, it is probable that, although this would be the meaning in our language, it denoted in Hebrew merely the certainty of the event. We may say, that in that day he became dead in law, as a criminal is after sentence has been pronounced upon him; that he then became mortal, his constitution being changed, and the seed sown in it which would ripen into death. It is frequently added, that he died spiritually; and whether this is the proper import of the word or not, it is a truth which I shall proceed to illustrate.

Spiritual death consists in the loss of the favour and image

of God, or is the moral change by which Adam was deprived of the holy principles with which he was endowed, and became incapable of loving and serving his Creator. There can be no doubt that such death was the effect of the fall, and it may therefore be included in the threatening.

Pelagius and his followers were of a different opinion. As he denied that the sin of Adam affected any but himself, so he seems to have thought that the injury which he sustained by it was slight, and that he retained his original power of doing good if he chose to exert it. Arminians may not speak in the same unqualified terms, but they do not admit that the effect of the fall was a total loss of what we call original righteousness. Even in his primitive state, man was not adorned, according to them, with the image of God, in the sense at least in which we understand it; for it chiefly consisted in his dominion over the other creatures, although it is granted that, at the same time, he was possessed of a considerable share of knowledge, and there was no disorder among his faculties. But, although his state was rendered worse, his nature was not thoroughly vitiated. He fell from a state of innocence and integrity, and his appetite was now more inclined to evil than before; but he did not fall into a state of moral impotence, or lose entirely his power to do good. It is inconceivable that one sinful act should have had the effect to cause a complete change of his dispositions. If you object, that spiritual death was comprehended in the punishment of Adam, they will grant that this is sometimes the meaning of death in the Scriptures; but they deny that it is to be so understood in the original threatening, which inferred nothing but a return to the dust. But, granting spiritual death to be included, they maintain that it ought not to be considered as implying the total loss of spiritual power. The metaphor ought not to be pressed too far; it is enough that there is some analogy between the state of the soul, and the state of the body after it has ceased to live; and if men do not perform good works, they may be said to be dead, without any inquiry whether they possess a power to perform them or not. Dr Taylor says, in his observations on the first three chapters of Genesis, "The threatening to man in case of transgression

was, that he should surely die. Death was to be the consequence of his disobedience. Death is the losing of life. Death is opposed to life, and must be understood according to the nature of that life to which it is opposed. Now, the death here threatened can, with any certainty, be opposed only to the life God gave Adam when he created him. Any thing besides this must be pure conjecture without solid foundation.”*

But, peremptory as the conclusion is, it is neither self-evident, nor can it be easily proved. If the death threatened was opposed to the life which Adam enjoyed, it must signify, not only the simple termination of his temporal existence, but the forfeiture of all the privileges attending it, among which the favour and image of God will be admitted to hold the principal place. Although it was only one sin which was committed, yet it dissolved the moral union between man and his Maker; and we cannot conceive him to have retained the moral excellence of his nature after this separation, any more than a branch retains life after it has been cut off from the tree, or a limb from the body. The history, concise as it is, gives indication of an unhappy change. Our first parents trembled at the voice of God, endeavoured to conceal themselves from him, and came into his presence with reluctance; thus betraying consciousness of guilt and alienation of heart. Perhaps there is force in the remark which has been made upon the difference of the language respecting Adam himself and his son. Adam was created in the image of God, but he begat a son in his own image. His own soul was pure at first, like Him who made it; but the soul of Seth was tainted with the impurity of his fallen parent. A state of sin is frequently represented under the image of death: “Let the dead bury their dead.”† “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”‡ “She who liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.”|| It is still more to our purpose, that the natural state of all mankind is expressed by the same metaphor, the state, I mean, in which they are prior to conversion: “You hath he quickened, which were dead in trespasses and sins.”§ This is the state, not only of the Gentiles, but

* Scrip. Doctrine of Original Sin, p. i.

† Matth. viii. 22.

‡ Rev. iii. 1.

|| 1 Tim. v. 6.

§ Eph. ii. 1.

of the Jews, as the context shews ; and as no reason can be given for its universality but original sin, and as this was the effect of man's apostasy from God, it may be justly considered as included in the threatening of death ; a term which is used in the sacred writings with great latitude of meaning.

The soul of Adam, which was the subject of this death, retained its natural powers. He did not lose all knowledge, nor become incapable of volition, nor did the operations of conscience entirely cease. He was still an intelligent, and, in a certain sense, a moral agent ; but his internal frame was deranged, and he could neither think nor will, neither love nor hate, in conformity to the law of righteousness. When the body dies, it becomes as inactive and unfeeling as a piece of unorganized matter. The effect is not the same in the case of spiritual death, because vitality is essential to the soul, but its operations are all unholy ; and consequently, it no more fulfils the purpose of its being than the dead body, which retains the organs of sense, but perceives nothing, and the instruments of motion, but is still as a stone. Such was the effect of sin upon Adam and his descendants. It could not dissolve our relation to God as our Creator, nor exempt us from his authority ; but it forfeited his favour, and suspended the intercourse, by which only the moral excellence with which he had adorned the soul could be preserved. The Divine Spirit, the Author of holiness under all dispensations, the Soul, if I may speak so, of the soul withdrew, and left guilty man not merely *in puris naturalibus*, as the Schoolmen say, but in the debasement and wretchedness which he had entailed upon himself by his voluntary act. The soul was the habitation of the Spirit ; but he abandoned it in just displeasure at the profanation which it had undergone.

“ That he hath withdrawn himself, and left this his temple desolate,” says Mr Howe, “ we have many plain and sad proofs before us. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front, yet extant, this doleful inscription, Here God once dwelt. Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to shew the Divine presence did once reside in it ; more than enough of vicious deformity to proclaim, he is now retired and gone. The lamps

are extinct; the altar overturned. The light and love are now vanished, which did the one shine with so heavenly brightness, and the other burn with so pious fervour. The golden candlestick is displaced, and thrown away as a useless thing, to make room for the throne of the Prince of darkness. The sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour, and here is, instead of a sweet savour, a stench. The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion; "the beauties of holiness" into noisome impurities.—The noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed unto vilest intuitions and embraces; to behold and admire lying vanities, to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness. What have not the enemies done wickedly in the sanctuary? How have they broken down the carved works thereof, and that too with axes and hammers!—Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of the great King; the relics of common notions, the lively prints of some undefaced truths, the fair ideas of things, the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold! with what accuracy the broken pieces show these to have been engraven by the finger of God, and how they now lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish. There is not now a system or entire table of coherent truth sto be found, or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels.—You come, amidst all this confusion, as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see, here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying neglected and useless. He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect, and doth but say to you, Behold the desolation, all things rude and waste. So that, should there be any pretence to the Divine presence, it might be said, If God be here, why is it thus? The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state, in all respects, of this temple, too plainly shew the great Inhabitant is gone."*

* Howe's Living Temple, Part ii. chap. iv.

In the last place, Eternal death was included in the penalty of the first covenant. This is denied, and it is maintained that nothing was threatened but the separation of the soul from the body, which would be the result of a train of previous miseries. This is evident, it is said, from the explanation of the sentence which God gave after the transgression of Adam, assigning it as his punishment that he should return to the dust, and making no mention of spiritual death, and the torments of hell, but solely of toil, and sorrow, and pain. It is certain, however, that the term, death, is often used in a figurative sense, to express the moral state of the soul, as we have already proved by several passages; and it is not less certain, that it signifies also the miserable state of the whole man in the world to come. This is acknowledged by those who will not admit that it bears this meaning in the present case; and, indeed, it is impossible for any person who has perused the Scriptures with attention, to be of a different opinion. When our Lord says, "He that believeth in me shall never die;" "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die;"* he evidently refers not to temporal, but to eternal death. In the same sense, dying and death must be understood in many other passages. The words of Paul are worthy of particular attention: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."† It is so manifest that here, death signifies something more than the separation of the soul from the body, that we shall scarcely meet with contradiction. The death is commensurate with the life; the gift of God is opposed to the loss which we have sustained by disobedience. Let it be observed, that death is the wages of sin, the recompence which it merits. Eternal death, therefore, must have been included in the punishment of Adam, for God would surely award to him what was his due. As he would not punish him more, so he would not punish him less, than his iniquity deserved, because he is strictly just. It is therefore absurd to suppose, that only temporal death was threatened; it is to suppose that the first sin was too slight to be treated with greater severity; and if

* John xi. 26. vi. 50.

† Rom. vi. 23.

so, it will follow that for no other sin the offender can be adjudged to final perdition. Eternal death is called the second death, to intimate, I presume, that it is connected with the first, and that the one succeeds the other, in execution of the same sentence. An argument may be drawn from the contrast which is stated between Adam and Christ, in the fifth chapter of the Romans. The condemnation which has come upon us by the former, is opposed to the justification which we obtain by the latter. But justification is a deliverance from eternal death, and implies not only the remission of sin, but a title to heavenly blessedness ; whence it is called the “ justification of life.”* The death threatened in the law, and the life promised in the gospel, are contraries, but from the one we may form a judgment of the other. If the life which we derive from the Second Adam is eternal, such must be the death entailed upon us by the first.

Eternal death is not the annihilation of man, but supposes him to be in a state of sensibility, because it is a positive punishment. It is, if I may speak so, a living death. “ These shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”† It is indeed called everlasting destruction, but it is the destruction of happiness, not of the persons who are capable of enjoying it. It will be inflicted upon the whole man ; and hence our Lord admonishes us to fear him “ who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”‡ The soul will be punished by means of the body, and will also undergo sufferings peculiar to itself. Separated from the Source of good, it will be tossed with incessant restlessness, and feel the torment of desires which it is impossible to satisfy. It will be agonized by a sense of the Divine displeasure, by the upbraidings of conscience, and by the terrors of despair. From this state of dereliction and absolute wretchedness there is no relief, no prospect of escape. Hope, which comes to all in this life, never comes to those who have failed in the trial. No new opportunity will be given to correct the fatal error. Such, according to the covenant, was the doom of the first transgressor ; and not of himself alone, but of his posterity who were connected

* Rom. v. 18.

† Rev. xxi. 8.

‡ Matth. x. 28.

with him as their federal, as well as their natural head. And our ruin would have been complete and irreparable, if God had not, in his infinite mercy, made a new covenant with us, in another Man who is the Lord from heaven, that as in Adam all died, so in Christ might all be made alive.

The final loss of a being destined to live for ever, and capable of perpetual improvement and felicity, is an awful thought. It is totally different from the wreck of a globe, for, when matter is deranged and scattered, there is no suffering; every dreadful idea is associated with it. It is more awful to think of the ruin of a whole order of beings, and still more so, to reflect that it is the effect of one sin, of the fault of one individual, in whose fall millions are involved. He who can contemplate this catastrophe without solemn impressions, is destitute of moral sensibility; and he who does not feel himself overpowered and embarrassed, has a mind peculiarly constituted. If he sees no difficulty, or imagines that he can solve every difficulty, he is blind and self-conceited. No part of the Divine dispensations is more mysterious, and calls more loudly for humble submission of mind. In comparison of it, some other points at which reason startles are plain. After having used every endeavour to satisfy ourselves, we shall find it wise and necessary to repress our inquiries and doubts by such questions as these, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid."*

I proceed to consider the promise of the covenant, which is not explicitly mentioned, but may be deduced from the threatening, upon the principle that, although we cannot appeal to justice for a reward, because no creature can merit any thing from the Creator, we may infer from the Divine benevolence, that obedience would have procured the good opposed to the evil which has been incurred by disobedience. But Socinians tell us, that God promised nothing to man, neither temporal nor eternal life, and that all promises relating to spiritual and heavenly blessings, are peculiar to the

* Rom. ix. 20, and 14.

new covenant. Arminians, as their sentiments are stated by Limborch,* believe, that man would not have died, if he had not sinned; and further, that it is credible, that when his obedience was sufficiently ascertained, God would have translated him to heaven; but that no promise of this kind was made, and the benefit would have been bestowed out of mere favour. It is strange to think how perversely these men act, and how they turn all things upside down. While they labour to prove that, under the new covenant, eternal life is to a certain extent obtained by works, they are as anxious to persuade us that, under the old covenant, it was owing solely to grace. They know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm, and are blind leaders of the blind.

It is granted, then, by some of our opponents, that if Adam had not sinned, he could not have died; obedience would have ensured the perpetual enjoyment of life. We do not say that he would have strictly deserved this recompence; but as his Maker gave him reason to hope for it, by denouncing death only as the punishment of disobedience, it would have been due to him according to the terms of the convention. All his descendants would have been immortal as himself; and as paradise could not have contained them, nor the world itself, it is probable that they would have been removed to another state in their order, where they would have led a life more refined, and more like that of the angels.

It is certain that he would have retained the image of God, in which, as we formerly proved, he was created. There was a possibility of losing it during the course of his trial; but when that was finished, there would have been no farther risk. His holy dispositions would have not only been strengthened by the trial, and have grown into habits, but they would have been confirmed by the power of God, as the angels are, who were once in a state of probation, and fallible as experience proved, but are now established in purity and blessedness. Some men object to the idea of Divine influence certainly determining the will, as inconsistent with its freedom; but their notions are absurd, because it follows from their principles, that no creature can ever arrive at an im-

* Theol. Christ. lib. iii. cap. 2.

mutable state, and that the saints and angels may change, and experience a reverse in their circumstances, unless they are converted into machines. The same power which has rendered their holiness permanent, would have secured Adam and his posterity from liability to sin. The life of purity and peace and communion with his Creator, which he enjoyed before his trial, would have been continued to him for ever. There would have been no darkness in his understanding, no disorder in his affections, no sorrow, no fear, no regret for the past, no anxiety about the future. The soul would have enjoyed perpetual sunshine, the body would have never suffered infirmity and decay, and nature around him would have bloomed with unfading beauty. He would have eaten the fruit of the tree of life, and been immortal. In a word, the great promise of the first covenant was eternal life, as it is of the second. This is evident from those passages of Scripture in which the terms of the first covenant are repeated. "The man that doeth those things shall live by them." "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."* This is not a new promise, for God has never entered into any new stipulation to reward man, on the ground of his obedience; it is the promise which was made from the beginning, and shews us what Adam was taught to expect, if he should obey the law of his Maker.

It remains to speak of the seals of the covenant. A seal has been defined to be the visible sign of invisible grace, and may be more generally described as an institution of which it is the design, to signify the blessings promised in the covenant, and to give an assurance of them to those by whom its terms have been fulfilled. Seals are posterior, in the order of nature, to the making of the covenant; and although, from the first, they may serve as motives and encouragements, the use of them is conceded to none but those who have obtained an actual claim to the promise. Some have maintained that there were four seals or sacraments of the covenant of works, paradise, the Sabbath, the tree of knowledge, and the tree of life; but the common opinion is, that

* Rom. x. 5. Matth. xix. 16, 17.

only the two latter sustained this character. I hope to convince you, that neither of these statements is correct.

Paradise has been pronounced to be a seal of the covenant. It was a garden of delights, adorned by the hand of God, and was a fit emblem of a still more glorious habitation, where Adam should contemplate the unveiled glory of his Creator, and be made supremely happy in the immediate fruition of his love. It is acknowledged that heaven is called paradise more than once in the New Testament ; but it does not follow that the earthly paradise was originally a type of it. It is more reasonable to think, that the one has been made the image of the other since the fall, to intimate that, by redemption, we are put in possession of all the felicity which man enjoyed in his primitive state. " A greater Man has restored us, and regained the blissful seat," from which we were expelled. It is, I think, a conclusive argument against paradise being a seal, that Adam was placed in it immediately after his creation, and dwelt in it during the time of his trial. But this is contrary to the nature and design of a seal, which is not administered till the terms of the covenant be fulfilled. No man will say that a person may be baptised and admitted to the Holy Supper before he has believed ; it is acknowledged that faith must precede. It is equally preposterous to suppose that, if paradise was an emblem and a pledge of the abode of man in a higher world, he was allowed to enter it, while it was yet uncertain whether he would perform the obedience, on which his title to the promise was suspended.

The Sabbath has been represented as another seal of the covenant. To Adam, it has been said, it was a symbol that when he had finished his labour upon earth, he should be translated into a place far more lovely than paradise, and should enjoy a rest much more delightful. When at certain seasons he suspended his daily employments, and gave himself wholly to the service of his Maker, was not this an earnest and a prelibation of the time when, freed from all care of this animal life, he should hold immediate communion with God, mingling with the choirs of angels, and engaging in their exercises ? The same objection may be urged against this seal as against the former, that the use of it was per-

mitted to Adam, and enjoined upon him, before his trial commenced. The first Sabbath immediately followed the day of his creation. It is a conjecture destitute of all probability that he fell on that day. The narrative of Moses contradicts it, according to which the Sabbath was past before the covenant was made; and a review of the events of the sixth day will convince us, that there was neither time nor opportunity for the temptation. Adam thus spent one Sabbath, and for aught that we know, many Sabbaths in paradise. He repeatedly enjoyed this sacred rest during his probation, which could not, for the reason alleged, be a seal of the covenant. Can we suppose, that God would confirm a promise to him to which he had not yet established his claim, and all interest in which he afterwards forfeited?

By Divines in this country, these two seals are generally discarded. But many of them assign this place to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, if possible, I think, with still greater impropriety. We need not spend time in inquiring into the reason of its name. It may have been so called, because God would by its means put man to the proof, whether he would retain the moral goodness with which he had endowed him, or would become evil by the abuse of his liberty. Thus, he is said to have tried Hezekiah, that he might know what was in his heart.* It may have been so called, because, by abstaining from its fruit, Adam would come to the possession of the highest good, but, by eating it, would involve himself in the greatest evil. It is only in this last view that it can be considered as a seal, being thus significant of the consequences of obedience and disobedience; but it is worthy of observation, that, contrary to the design of other seals, it confirmed the threatening as much as the promise. Except in this case, seals are always understood to be appended to the promise; and the common relation of the tree of knowledge to both the promise and the threatening, may justly make us doubt whether it was really such. To assign this use to it is to confound two things, which, in all other covenants, are perfectly distinct, the condition and the seal. Here the same thing serves both purposes. That which tried man's obedience

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

is made the seal of the reward of his obedience. But, while the trial was going on, it could seal nothing to him, because it was uncertain what would be the issue; and if the trial had ended happily, it does not appear that the tree of knowledge would have been of any further service. It is much more simple and rational to consider it merely as the subject of the condition of the covenant, and not to invest it with two contradictory characters; and besides, it should be remembered, that the only ground for supposing it to be a seal, is a particular interpretation of its name, which is matter of conjecture, and for which another may be substituted with equal probability.

Lastly, The tree of life has been considered as a seal of the covenant, and in this opinion I concur. I believe that it was a seal, and the only one which God was pleased to appoint. I reason in the first place from its name. It was called the tree of life, to signify, I apprehend, that it was a symbol of the life promised to obedience. This interpretation is justified by the figurative use of the name, in reference to the happiness of the world to come. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." * We know that this paradise is heaven, in which there is literally no tree of this or any other description; and therefore, as it denotes eternal life in this application, we are authorised to conclude, that it was a symbolical representation of it in the earthly paradise. The idea that it is called the tree of life, because it possessed a virtue to render the body immortal, is absurd, and much resembles a Jewish or Mahometan fable. Can any one tell what he means, by ascribing such virtue to it? Has he studied in the school of the alchemists, who amused themselves and the world so long, with the hope of discovering the elixir of life? Is it conceivable that immortality could be imparted by the physical process of swallowing and digesting a material substance? I reason, in the second place, from the words of God: "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and

* Rev. ii. 7.

live for ever,"* *he must be expelled from the garden*; for these, or words to this purpose, must be supplied to complete the sense, the passage being elliptical. The words have been supposed to have been spoken in irony, and certainly God might have treated with derision man's impious attempt to rise to an equality with him; or they are merely a statement of what was his design, or what was his hope in which he had miserably failed. But, whatever is the import of the words, "Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil," the meaning of those which follow is easily perceived. Adam, whose understanding was darkened, as his affections were corrupted by sin, might entertain the notion which has been embraced by some of his posterity, that the fruit of the tree of life would make him immortal, and in this foolish expectation might stretch out his rash hand and seize it. To prevent this act, he was driven out of the garden. This was done, not merely that he might not delude himself with this false hope, but that he might not profanely appropriate what did not belong to him. There was no reason why a precaution should be used against his eating the fruit of this more than of any other tree, if it had not been a seal; but if it stood in this relation to the covenant, Adam had no right to it, and it was fitting that he should be forcibly hindered from taking the symbol of eternal life, both for the glory of God, whose sacred institution was not to be profaned, and that he might be made sensible of the full extent of his misery. The pledge of eternal life was denied him, that he might feel how dreadful was the loss which he had incurred by transgression.

From these arguments it will appear, that we are authorised to regard the tree of life as the seal of the covenant. I trust that you are also satisfied, that the other seals which have been mentioned are imaginary. This illustration has extended much farther than I had anticipated, but I have still some observations to make upon the covenant and its consequences.

* Gen. iii. 22.

LECTURE XLVII.

ON THE FALL OF MAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

COVENANT OF WORKS, CONTINUED.—HOW FAR IT STILL SUBSISTS.—EFFECTS OF ADAM'S BREACH OF IT UPON HIS POSTERITY.—THE IMPUTATION OF HIS GUILT, AND ORIGINAL SIN.—PROOFS OF THESE DOCTRINES, FROM SCRIPTURE AND EXPERIENCE.

AFTER the account which has been given of the covenant of works, it remains to inquire whether it still subsists, or has been disannulled by the violation of its terms. I apprehend that the ideas of some on this subject are inaccurate, or at least that they use language which is not consistent with truth. I do not mean those who, from ignorance of the true design of redemption, imagine that God has made a new covenant of works with us, which, on account of its mitigated terms, they are pleased to call a covenant of grace, but Divines sound in the faith, who firmly maintain that our own works are in no sense the cause of our salvation, but yet speak as if the first covenant still continued, offering eternal life upon condition of obedience, and object to the idea of its being antiquated or abrogated.

I observe, in the first place, That the law of the covenant, as we may justly call the moral law, of subjection to which the command respecting the tree of knowledge was a test—that the law retains all its authority. Man might renounce his allegiance to God, but he could not withdraw from his domi-

nion, which is founded in the nature of things, and undergoes no alteration, whatever changes may take place in the circumstances of his subjects. A rebel does not cease to owe obedience to his lawful prince, or it would follow, that he was punishable only for his revolt, but not for the crimes which he might subsequently commit. It has been said, that God could not claim obedience from man, because he was no longer in covenant with him ; of which objection this is the import, that Adam was not bound to obey his Creator but by voluntary consent, or was not bound to obey him without the stipulation of a reward. It is hardly possible to conceive an opinion more clearly stamped with the characters of folly and impiety. As for the assertion, that God could not justly require obedience from man after he had become incapable of performing it, it will deserve attention, only when it is proved, that his sin was not voluntary, and that it was not himself, but his Maker, that put him in a state of moral inability.

I observe, in the second place, That the penalty of the covenant is in force against all who are under it. It began immediately to be executed upon Adam, who lost the image and favour of God, became subject to pain and sorrow, and was liable to death ; and it has been executed upon the successive generations of his posterity. God did not revoke the penalty, or substitute a milder punishment, when he introduced the new dispensation ; he only provided the means by which man might be delivered from the original sanction. There was now a possibility of escaping the consequences of sin, if they would cordially accept the proffered salvation ; but, in the mean time, they remained in a state of condemnation, the heirs of all the misery which their first parents had entailed upon them. “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them,”* is the sentence pronounced upon the descendants of Adam.

I observe in the third place, That the covenant itself is abolished, by which I mean that, although it still demands obedience to its precepts, and executes its penalty upon transgressors, it does not promise life to the obedient. There is now no federal transaction between God and man, according

* Gal. iii. 10.

to which he engages to give life to the keepers of the law. It is indeed often said, that, if men could fulfil the demands of the law, they would be entitled to happiness; but this is a mistake. The constitution upon which alone man's title could be founded was disannulled, and has not been re-established. That it was disannulled will be perfectly evident, if you reflect upon the nature of a covenant. It is an agreement between two parties upon certain terms. If the terms are not fulfilled, the agreement is dissolved, and the penalty, if one was proposed, takes effect. The promisee cannot come forward at some future time, and say to the promiser, I will now do what was prescribed. The latter is no longer bound by his promise, may reject the offered service, because the season when he wanted it is gone by, and has a right to exact the penalty. In consequence of the sin of Adam, the agreement which his Creator had made with him came to an end. He had violated the condition, lost all claim to the promise, and fallen under the penalty. There was no clause in the covenant providing him with an opportunity to retrieve his fault, and still holding out the hope of the reward after he had failed. His eternal interests were suspended upon one trial, and if it terminated fatally, his doom was fixed for ever. You will observe that, if what has been now said is true in respect of Adam, it is true also in respect of his posterity, who were identified with him, and placed in the same circumstances by the covenant. It cannot be, therefore, that a promise of life is still made to them upon condition of obedience, for no such promise was made to him after the fall. His hope was founded upon a new promise, a promise of mercy through the seed of the woman, and God gives no other hope to his posterity. Let it not be imagined, that there is a proposal of two ways of obtaining happiness in the world to come, the one by the works of the law, and the other by faith. Men may dream of the former, but they only dream, for, besides the utter impossibility of the thing, God has never come under a new obligation to reward their obedience. The covenant of works is superseded by the covenant of grace, and the promise of life belongs to that covenant alone. It is an error, therefore, to represent men in a natural state, as under the covenant of

works, when it is meant that they are required to perform perfect obedience as the condition of life. Perfect obedience is demanded from them, but not as the condition of life; for never since the fall did God promise life upon such terms. The first covenant, as a covenant, no longer exists. Nothing remains of it but the precept and the penalty; the promise is cancelled.

It may be alleged that this doctrine is not in accordance with Scripture, in some passages of which the original tenor of the covenant is expressed. "The man that doeth those things shall live by them." * "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." † But does any person seriously think, that this is a re-enactment of the covenant? Did God intend to teach the Israelites, or our Saviour the young man who was inquiring the way to heaven, that future happiness was still promised to human obedience? No; the design in both cases was to convince the self-righteous of the impracticable nature of the task which they had undertaken; to shew them that there was an insurmountable obstacle to the attainment of their hopes; to remind them that, according to their own plan, there was required an obedience too pure and extensive to be performed by such power as man possesses in his fallen state. Such passages do not import that there is still a constitution by which obedience and life are connected, but, proceeding according to men's own notions of the matter, they demonstrate the folly of their expectations, from the unconquerable difficulty of the enterprise.

Let us now inquire what are the consequences of the first sin to the posterity of Adam. If it were true, as Pelagians maintain, that he was not the representative of his children, and that God dealt with him as an individual, it would also be true that none was affected by his sin but himself; but if a covenant was made with him, the consequences are necessarily the same to him and his descendants. It follows from the nature of a federal transaction, that the interests of both were identified, so that the evil which he incurred is transmitted to them as their inheritance. There is no possibility of getting rid of this conclusion, but by refuting the arguments produced to prove that the transaction with Adam was of a federal nature.

* Rom. x. 5.

† Matth. xix. 17.

We say, then, in the first place, That by his sin his posterity became liable to the punishment denounced against himself. They became guilty through his guilt, which is imputed to them, or placed to their account, so that they are treated as if they had personally broken the covenant. I do not see in what other sense we can understand the words of the Apostle, "By one man's disobedience many were made" or constituted "sinners."* It is not satisfactory to say, that they are treated as sinners although they are not really such, because the question naturally follows, How can they be justly treated as sinners, if they are not guilty? and the question is unanswerable. "The judgment was by one," or by one offence, "to condemnation."† We have, in these words, an act of judgment ascribed to God, who always judges according to truth; the ground upon which it proceeded, the one offence, the deed of one man; and the sentence expressed in the term, condemnation. Now, as it appears from the context that the subjects of this sentence are men universally, it was plainly the doctrine of Paul, that all men are punished according to Divine justice for the transgression of Adam. There is no mention of their personal sins, with whatever demerit they are attended, but of one sin committed before they were born, by him whose children they are. He expresses the same mournful truth by saying again, "Through the offence of one many are dead."‡ And here we must recur again to a fact, which formerly engaged our attention, the prevalence of temporal death. That man was mortal in his primitive state, is so gross a falsehood, that it scarcely deserves a serious refutation. We have seen the absurdity of pretending that death is sent as a favour, and that, although our death is the consequence of the sin of Adam, it is not to be considered as properly a punishment. These are all contrivances by which some men, who have previously adopted a system, endeavour to make the Scripture give countenance to it, and do not scruple, when they are pushed, openly to give it the lie. It is the doctrine of Paul, that death has come upon us by the sin of Adam, not accidentally or naturally, but by the operation of law: "By one man sin entered into

* Rom. v. 19.

† Ib. 16.

‡ Ib. 15.

the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned :” * *εφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον*. The expression, *εφ’ ᾧ*, has been explained in two different ways. If we render it “in whom,” as some critics contend, the Apostle teaches, that as death came by the sin of Adam, so all other men die because they sinned in him. If we translate it, “because all have sinned,” then the Apostle affirms that all die, because all are sinners. But this cannot be true, if the imputation of Adam’s guilt be denied, for thousands of the human race die in infancy, before they are capable of committing actual sin. The Apostle brings infants under our notice in a following verse : “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” † Some understand by these, adults who, during the interval between Adam and Moses, could not sin as Adam did, because they were not subject to a law which forbade sin under the penalty of death; and, therefore, they admit that they must have died for his sin. But was there ever a time when men were without law to God, or his law did not denounce death upon transgressors? No, this was the penalty of sin under all dispensations. It is more consonant to Scripture and common sense, to understand by those “who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” infants, of whom this description is very properly given, because they could not be guilty of actual sin. Yet, they died as well as adults; and how can we account for the fact, but upon the supposition that, some how or other, they were sinners in the sight of God? They are among the “all men” upon whom death has passed, and it must be true that they, as well as adults, have sinned. The death of infants is utterly inexplicable, but upon the principle of original sin. As they die in the common course of events, so they have been involved in those terrible judgments which are monuments of the power and wrath of the Almighty. The children of Sodom and Gomorrha perished with their wicked fathers and mothers; and this indiscriminate destruction took place after Abraham had said to the Most High, “That be far from thee, to slay

* Rom. v. 12.

† Ib. 14.

the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* and the Lord had assured him that he would make a distinction. Here was a case in which evil was not to fall promiscuously upon a people, but they alone were to suffer, who were found worthy of punishment; yet here children were destroyed with their parents. Let it not be said that they could not escape, when the fire fell from heaven upon their habitations. Besides that there are no limits to the power of God, he could have saved them as he saved Lot and his family, by the ministry of angels; yet the angels did not carry away a single infant, but left them all behind. It is therefore certain that they were not righteous, and that, although free from the enormous crimes of the adults, they were chargeable with some sin, and what could that be but the sin of our nature? It may be said that God could compensate the sufferings of those innocents in the world to come. This is nothing to the purpose, as the same thing might have been said of Lot, and any other righteous person who happened to be in the city. On this principle there was no better reason for delivering him than for delivering them. But God had declared that he would not slay the righteous with the wicked; he did slay the children, and the inference is plain, that the children were guilty.

I shall appeal to another passage, in proof of the imputation of guilt to the posterity of Adam, and their obnoxiousness to punishment. Speaking of the children of disobedience in whom the evil spirit works, the Apostle adds, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."† It is observable, that, while he addresses in the first instance the Ephesians, who were Gentiles, he afterwards includes himself and his compatriots the Jews in this account, shewing that he is describing the moral state of the whole human race. It is an assertion contrary to evidence, that he is speaking of the Gentiles alone; for why did he change the person, if the subject of discourse was the same?

* Gen. xviii. 25.

† Eph. ii. 3.

Would it not be absurd in a man who was talking to an assembly of the poor or the diseased about their case, suddenly to change his style, and include himself in the number, while he was rich and in good health? It is vain, therefore, to pretend that the words, "and were by nature children of wrath," are referrible only to the Gentiles. Whatever they signify, they are descriptive of the natural state of all unconverted men. It has been contended that the phrase, "by nature," simply means, really or truly, and that men are really children of wrath, in consequence of their wicked practices. In this manner, the argument for original sin from this passage is evaded. Undoubtedly this is not the obvious sense of the expression, the sense suggested by the use of it on other occasions, and arising from the understood import of the term, nature. What any thing is by nature, it is by its original constitution. This quality is coeval with it. We oppose what is natural to what is acquired. If, then, the Apostle meant that the Ephesians and others were children of wrath by practice, had incurred the anger of God by their personal sins, it must be acknowledged that he did not adopt the most luminous mode of conveying his meaning. The word "nature" was unhappily chosen, being calculated, as no explanation of it is subjoined, to give a false idea of the moral condition of men; and, accordingly, it has led to the conclusion, that they are objects of the Divine disapprobation when they come into the world. It is alleged, however, that this interpretation of the word is not without the authority of the Apostle himself; and a passage is produced, in which it is said that nature unquestionably signifies practice or custom: "Doth not even nature itself—*αυτη η φυσις*—teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?"* What else can *φυσις* here signify but custom? Although, however, *φυσις* should mean custom in one solitary instance, this would not be a good reason for so explaining it in other instances, where the connexion did not necessarily require it. It is not sound criticism to say, A word occurs once in an unusual sense, and therefore we may give it the same sense when it occurs again. But there is no cause for departing

* 1 Cor. xi. 14.

from the common acceptation in the passage before us. "The emphasis used, *αυτη η φυσις*, *nature itself*, shews," says Mr Edwards, "that the Apostle does not mean custom, but nature in the proper sense. It is true it was long custom that made having the head covered a token of subjection, and a feminine habit or appearance, as it is custom that makes any outward action or word a sign or signification of any thing; but nature itself, nature in its proper sense, teaches that it is a shame for a man to appear with the established signs of the female sex. Nature itself shews it to be a shame for a father to bow down or kneel to his own child or servant, because bowing down is, by custom, an established token of subjection and submission." * To express his idea more clearly and concisely, as custom had made long hair a part of a woman's dress, nature itself taught that it was a shame for a man to wear it, because, by doing so, he confounded the visible distinction between the sexes. The result of this discussion is, that nature is to be understood literally, when we are said to be "by nature children of wrath," and the meaning is, that we are born in a state of condemnation.

Thus I have proved the first proposition, that in consequence of the sin of Adam, his posterity are obnoxious to the penalty.

I observe, in the second place, That in consequence of his sin, they come into the world in a state of depravity. Pelagius and his followers maintained that, notwithstanding what had happened to Adam, the power of free will remains entire, and that, independently of Divine grace, man is capable of beginning, carrying on, and consummating good works; that God gives us the ability, but that we can exert it without farther assistance. Socinus treated the idea of innate depravity as a fable and a dream. The sin of Adam was so far from corrupting his posterity, that it did not destroy the image of God in himself, and it remains entire in all other men. Arminians admit that we are born less pure than Adam was, and that we have a greater inclination to sin, which is apt to be excited even by a light occasion; but as far as this inclination, or concupiscence as it is called, is from nature,

* Edwards on Original Sin, Part ii. Chap. 3. § 3.

and not contracted by vicious custom, it is not properly sin. It is merely the natural appetite or desire of having what is agreeable, and avoiding what is disagreeable; which, as long as the will does not consent to it, is not sinful, but furnishes matter for the exercise of virtue. Virtue is discovered by conquering the desire of the flesh; but there would be no place for it, if the flesh spontaneously desired nothing but what reason approved. Papists hold the same opinion concerning concupiscence, because, finding that it remains in all men, they are under the necessity of denying that it is sin, to uphold the doctrine of their Church, that original sin is completely taken away in baptism. And thus both combine to set aside the argument for original sin, founded on this tendency, this proneness to evil, which is one of the strongest proofs that our nature is tainted. Yet it is of this proneness to evil, this inflammability of our nature which every spark is in danger of kindling, that Paul speaks in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known desire, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of desire" or "concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." * Here he expressly calls concupiscence sin, and represents it as flowing from a sinful principle in the heart; but it seems that, before his conversion, he was as blind as Arminians and Papists, and never suspected it to be sin, till he became better acquainted with the law, and found the desire to be so importunate and imperious, that the more it was forbidden, it was the more violent in its operation.

The doctrine of our Church is thus stated in the Confession of Faith: "By this sin," of our first parents, "they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation." † Again, in the chapter on free will, it says, "Man, by his

* Rom. vii, 7, 8.

† Conf. c. vi. § 2, and 3.

fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”*

A difficulty meets us at the outset. If, as we say, the soul of man is depraved from the commencement, what shall we say? Does God create it sinful? Does he infuse depraved principles at its first formation? Then he must be the Author of sin? or is it pure when it comes from his hands? and is it contaminated by its connexion with the body? Then we may ask, How can there be moral contagion in a piece of matter? or how can the union of a spirit to it, cause the pollution of that spirit? These are questions which cannot be answered. They are curious, but not useful. They may perplex us; but a solution of them is not necessary to the proof of the doctrine, which rests upon arguments supplied by both Scripture and experience.

Let us begin with Scripture. Our first proof shall be taken from an early period of the history of mankind. It is said before the flood, “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”† Lest we should think that the description is applicable only to the corrupt generation which then lived, and may be regarded as a singular one, since the Divine patience would no longer bear it, God said again, after the flood, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth;”‡ intimating that, notwithstanding this awful testimony against sin, it would still abound in the world; for it was like a stream which, having suffered a temporary check from some external cause, will continue to flow, because it has a permanent source. The word rendered imagination, signifies a figment, or formation; and, in its present use, denotes a device or contrivance of the mind. “The imagination of man’s heart” is expressive of the operation of his faculties, intellectual and moral. All his thoughts, all his desires, all his purposes are evil, expressly or by implication; because the subject of them is

* Conf. c. ix. § 3.

† Gen. vi. 5.

‡ Gen. viii. 21.

avowedly sinful, or because they do not proceed from a holy principle, and are not directed to a proper end. The words are pleonastic, since to say, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil," was sufficient; but, as if with a design to exclude the possibility of evasion, and to exhibit the truth in the most emphatic manner, it is added, that they are "only evil," evil without any mixture of good, and they are evil "continually," or all the day. It is not occasionally that the human soul is thus under the influence of depravity; but this is its habitual state. It seems impossible to construct a sentence, which should more distinctly express its total corruption. Now, there must be some cause of this constant and universal effect; and the sacred historian refers it to our nature itself, when he affirms that the imagination of man's heart is evil "from his youth." The word translated "youth," is not only used to denote the period of life commonly so called, but comprehends infancy also, and, in the present case, must be thus understood; for we cannot account for it, that man should be sinful from his youth, unless the seeds of evil exist in his constitution, unless he be sinful from the commencement of his being. Such a description would not have been given, if we came into the world perfectly pure, or with merely a tendency to evil, which might be checked in innumerable cases by education, and a variety of circumstances. The tree must be corrupted to the core, which produced corrupt fruit at first, and continues to produce it as long as it stands. There is not a saving clause in this description, not a word introduced in favour of human nature; but it is portrayed as an unmingled mass of corruption.

Let us next attend to the words of David, in the fifty-first Psalm, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."* The occasion of composing it, was his conduct in the matter of Uriah, which, when the time of reflection came, appeared to him in the most odious light, and gave rise to deep contrition, humble confession, and earnest prayer. But it was not this sin alone by which he was affected. The sins of his past life presented themselves to his mind in a long train, and accompanied with great

* Psalm li. 5.

aggravations ; and tracing them back, step by step, he arrived at the source from which they had all proceeded, the original depravity of his nature. In this sense only can the words quoted be understood. To suppose him to refer to some sin of his parents, is absurd ; for if they had been guilty of some sin, in relation to him, the mention of it would have been out of place on this occasion, when he was not confessing their guilt, but his own. When a penitent betakes himself to the merey of God, he is thinking of his own transgressions, and anxious to obtain pardon for himself ; he certainly will not go out of his way, to enumerate the faults of others, and least of all, in the form of crimination. Why should David have recalled, at this time, the sin of his mother ? Was it the cause of his sin ? or would it serve to alleviate it ? No ; he had sinned from his own choice, and he was willing to bear all the blame. Besides, we know of no sin of his parents, which he could have in his eye. He was not born in fornication, but in lawful wedlock ; his mother was not an adulteress, but a virtuous woman. She and Jesse were both sinners, as all men are ; but no particular criminality attached to them, on account of the birth of their son. It is equally absurd to suppose him to mean, that he was born with a constitution which inclined him to licentiousness. What had this to do with his mother ? If he inherited it from her, does he not throw an unseemly reflection upon her character, such as we should hardly expect from the most worthless of mankind ? If he merely intended to plead his natural constitution as an alleviation of his crime, we may ask, Is it the character of a penitent, to endeavour to exculpate himself ? Could he allege, as an apology, his physical temperament, without virtually insinuating, that it was owing more to God than to himself, that he had committed the sin to which it inclined him ? Yet to this wretched shift have some had recourse, in order to evade the evidence from this passage, for original sin. The testimony is decisive. David was “ shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin.” Sin was an element of his being ; the embryo in the womb was tainted. His nature was depraved before he saw the light. Men might have called him an innocent ; but, in the eyes of God, he was polluted. How

could he be corrupted, before he was capable of acting and thinking, but by the transmission of moral defilement from Adam, his federal head?

The next passage is taken from the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." * This word "flesh" occurs in different senses. Sometimes it signifies men, who are so called, because they live in fleshly bodies: "All flesh is grass." "The end of all flesh is come:" "Except these days were shortened, no flesh should be saved." † It also signifies the corrupt principle in man, or his nature as depraved: "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." "They who are in the flesh, cannot please God." ‡ It is used in both senses, in the passage which we are considering; and this is not the only instance of the occurrence of the same word, with two different meanings attached to it, in the same sentence: "Let the dead bury their dead;" || that is, let the spiritually dead bury those who are literally dead, as is evident from the occasion on which the words were spoken. In the first place, the flesh signifies man. Our Lord is speaking of two births, of which he ascribes the first to the flesh, and the second to the Spirit. The Spirit is the Author of the second, as he affirms in the preceding verse, and man is the instrument of the first. Natural and supernatural generation are referred to their respective causes. There can therefore be no doubt, that, in the first place, the flesh signifies man. There can be as little doubt, that, in the second place, it signifies moral corruption; for it is opposed to spirit, or that which the operations of the Spirit produces, and this is holiness. To imagine the meaning to be that man begets man, would represent our Lord as uttering with solemnity a saying unworthy of him, since it conveys no information, and destroys the contrast between the two parts of the verse. The Spirit generates something totally different from that which the flesh generates. But the subjects of regeneration are sanctified; the subjects of natural birth must therefore have pollution conveyed to them from

* John iii. 6. † Is. xl. 6. Gen. vi. 13. Matth. xxiv. 22.

‡ Rom. vii. 18. Ib. viii. 13. Gal. v. 17. Rom. viii. 8. || Matth. viii. 22.

their parents. I do not see that any other sense can be reasonably put upon the words; and if this interpretation is just, we have the testimony of Him who knew what was in man, in opposition to those who maintain that we are pure at our birth, or that our nature is so slightly tainted, that it retains much of its original goodness. For, let it be observed, that flesh, when metaphorically applied, denotes moral evil alone, moral evil without mixture. "Those who are in the flesh," in whom it is the reigning principle, "cannot please God." There is nothing about them of which he approves. When it is represented as remaining in the saints, it still sustains the character of unmingled evil. Hence Paul says, that "in his flesh," the corrupt part of him, "there dwelt no good thing,"* and declares that "the flesh lusts against the spirit," contends against the renewed part of our nature; "and these are contrary, the one to the other."† At his natural birth, man, according to our Saviour, is flesh, wholly a polluted thing; it is only at his supernatural birth that he becomes spirit, or is inspired with the principles of holiness.

I might argue from the words of Job, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."‡ He is speaking of the frailty and misery of man, who is born of a woman, and is of few days, and full of trouble; and he assigns the cause. He is afflicted and mortal, not merely because he is guilty of many personal sins, but because he is come out of an unclean thing. He is the descendant of a polluted race; he inherited corruption from his parents, who were the channel in which it was conveyed to him, from the original source of impurity.

A general argument may be founded on the doctrine of Scripture respecting the necessity of regeneration. We must be born again; we must "put off the old man, and put on the new:"§ we are "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour."§ All this is unintelligible, if the nature of man is not wholly depraved. Hence those who deny original sin, or entertain superficial views of it, are

* Rom. vii. 18.

† Gal. v. 17.

‡ Job xiv. 4.

§ Col. iii. 9, 10.

§ Tit. iii. 5, 6.

much in the same condition with Nicodemus, when the subject was first proposed to him, and ask, How can this be? Regeneration, the name of which they are compelled to admit, dwindles into baptism, or a profession of Christianity, or a reformation of life. They cannot understand it to mean a radical change of disposition, because, upon their principles, such a change is not necessary. If man is pure when he comes into the world, religion cannot make him better; and if he has some unruly appetites, but possesses nobler principles to control them, he needs no assistance, or only such assistance as is afforded by the external teaching of the word, and the dispensations of Providence. But no person, who takes the Bible as his instructor, can believe that nothing more is wanted. A change is there described, which human power cannot effect, and which is the work of the Spirit of God; a change so great and so complete, that it is fitly compared to a second birth, a creation out of nothing, a resurrection from the dead. Regeneration does not consist in repairing our injured moral system, but in making it anew. It is pre-supposed that we have lost original righteousness, are thoroughly depraved, and wholly disqualified for serving and glorifying God. The Scriptural doctrine of regeneration is inseparably connected with the doctrine of original sin. Both stand or fall together.

A proof of original sin may be deduced from the early appearances of depravity in children. The young of the lion and the tiger may be comparatively harmless, and submit to be handled, because they have not yet acquired their natural strength, and their dispositions are not fully unfolded; but even then, they will give indications of the ferocity by which their species is distinguished. It is not long till infants begin to shew, by their fruit, that they are shoots from a bitter root. "I sinned," says Augustine, "in my infancy; and although I do not remember what I then did, I learn it from the conduct of others at the same age. I discovered dispositions which would be blamed in me now, and which, when we grow up, we are at pains to eradicate. I sought with tears, what it would have been improper to give me; I was indignant at my superiors, and my parents, because they would not comply with my wishes, and attempted to avenge

myself by striking them. I have seen a child that could not speak, full of envy, and turn pale with anger at another that was suckled along with it."* We may add to these instances, the deceit and falsehood which are found in children, and illustrate the saying of the Psalmist: "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."† We are apt to look upon these things with a smile of indulgence, and to ascribe them to ignorance, or the absence of reason, rather than to depravity. But, if they are in themselves at variance with the Divine law, to which man's nature was at first exactly conformed, a change must have taken place in his moral frame, or there would have been no disorder in it at any period of his life, no movement which was not in unison with the standard. Can we conceive any thing similar in the infant Redeemer; any signs of impatience, jealousy, and anger, even a passing emotion to disturb the calm of his mind? Let us think of Him, and learn what human nature would have been from the first moment of life, if it had retained its primitive innocence.

The last proof which I shall produce of original sin is, the universal depravity of mankind, for which it is impossible to account in a satisfactory manner, unless we admit the depravity of their nature. If it is allowed, on all hands, that a tree is known by its fruit, and a man's disposition by his words and actions, this rule ought, in fairness, to be applied to the whole race; and, finding them all corrupt in practice, we are bound to conclude that they are corrupt in heart. Besides the evidence afforded by our personal experience, and by history which supplies its defects, the testimony of Scripture, from which there is no appeal, is decisive.

In the first part of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul discusses the subject, and proves, by an induction of particulars, that Jews and Gentiles were both under sin. The Gentiles had all fallen into idolatry; and not liking to retain God in their knowledge, were given up to a reprobate mind, and vile affections, in consequence of which they sunk into the lowest state of moral degradation. No kind of sin can be conceived which was not practised among them; and their wisest men

* August. Confess. Lib. I. cap. vii.

† Ps. lvi. 3.

did not escape the contagion. There was not one of them whose character would bear investigation. Common readers are imposed upon by the extravagant praises bestowed upon certain individuals, but Paul has pronounced a sentence of reprobation upon their most renowned philosophers ; and from what we know of them, it is not too much to say, that their virtue, which is admired when dead, if it were alive and displayed before our eyes, would excite our abhorrence.

The depravity of the Gentiles may not excite surprise, because their religion, instead of restraining it, furnished a stimulus to the most abominable vices, in the example of their profligate gods. Were the Jews better than they ? They had a law published by God himself, and enforced by promises and threatenings ; and prophets were sent to enjoin obedience, and to reprove their transgressions. Yet the history of the Jews is a continued narrative of rebellion against the authority of heaven. In the wilderness they provoked the Holy One of Israel ; they revolted from his worship in their own land : blessed or chastised, they were still the same, a refractory and ungrateful people. Every person knows how low was the state of religion and morality among them at the time of our Saviour's appearance.

A review of the history of the world in various nations and ages would confirm the doctrine of Scripture concerning the entrance of sin, and the depravity of our species ; and Christendom, with all its advantages, would furnish as ample proof as the other regions of the earth. Sin, although there subjected to some restraints, appears with great power, and in many an odious form, and men every where exhibit the same general character. There is no way of accounting for this state of things, but upon the hypothesis, that man is in a fallen state, and has lost the image of his Maker. Accidental differences among men, such as the colour of the skin, and the formation of the features, may be explained by local and occasional causes ; but the shape of the body, the organs of sense with which it is furnished, the contrivances for receiving and digesting food, and the other operations by which life is sustained, and which are found to prevail throughout the varieties of the species, we consider as effects of a general

and permanent law. If we reason in the same manner concerning universal depravity, we must come to the conclusion, that there is something radically wrong in human nature, some inherent principle which gives rise to this uniformity, for which external and adventitious circumstances are not sufficient to account. As, in physical science, we discover the properties of matter in general, and the distinguishing properties of particular substances by experiment, so the moral quality of human nature is ascertained by our own observations, and that of others transmitted to us in authentic channels. Whence is it that depravity exists in all the individuals of a particular age, and has existed in all past generations?

Some endeavour to explain this fact by the influence of bad example, by which they must mean, that men, although capable of virtue, and born with good dispositions, are led astray by seeing others walking in the paths of vice. Now, in order to be consistent, as they cannot deny that depravity is very general, they must admit that bad example is general. The cause must be commensurate with the effect. If it were only here and there that bad example is exhibited, it would be only here and there that corruption would be diffused. It follows, therefore, that there has been bad example in all ages and nations, in all provinces, cities, villages, and families. Hence it appears, that this is a preposterous attempt to account for a thing by itself. We ask, How it comes to pass that men are so generally corrupt? and our opponents answer, It is because their conduct is generally wicked. But this is the very fact about which we are inquiring. We say to them, Explain it to us, and they refer us to the fact itself. If human nature is not depraved, what is the cause that men, every where and at all times, exhibit bad example? If they are not wicked in heart, why are they wicked in practice? But further, if human nature is not depraved, why is bad example so readily imitated? What gives it such extensive influence? Common sense would dictate, that there must be a tendency to evil, since it is so generally followed. What always takes place, must be owing to a permanent cause. Surely if men came into the world without sin, they would be more likely to imitate good than bad example; and if they had only a slight inclination to it, the goodness of the example would, in many

cases, prove a check to that inclination, and the result would be an extensive prevalence of virtuous practice. This attempt to account for the corruption of mankind, independently of the corruption of their nature, is extremely foolish. The general imitation of bad example demonstrates an innate propensity to evil; and this is the point for which we are contending.

Others would account for the depravity of mankind by the abuse of free-will, by which they mean the power which man possesses of choosing and refusing, by his own sovereign determination, independently of motives. It has been justly observed, that such free-will is of all causes the most uncertain. It cannot be known beforehand how it will decide; and it is utterly inconceivable that a cause so unsteady and capricious should produce a uniform effect. There is a manifest absurdity, therefore, in this attempt to account for the depravity of men in all ages and nations. You might as well account for the regular return of day and night by the motion of a weathercock. We may ask, Whence have men, in all ages, abused their free-will? Why, if they are masters of their own volitions, have they always chosen in one way? How is it, if their wills are equally free to good and evil, that they have not determined in favour of good? If we found that, in every trial, one of the scales of a balance descended, we should conclude that it was heavier than the other; and can we draw any other conclusion respecting the will, on observing how regularly it decides in favour of evil? It has chosen evil among Jews, Gentiles, Mahometans, and Christians: it chooses it in Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. This is not the work of chance; it is the result of a previous bias. The will is inclined to evil, and therefore human nature is depraved.

Nothing is more unmeaning than the declamations of some men concerning human nature, because they are contrary to experience. If, when they tell us of its virtuous dispositions, they mean any thing more than the authority which conscience retains to a certain extent, the instincts and affections which we possess in common with the lower animals, a sense of honour which is pride disguised under a decent name, the civilities of life, and the performance of certain duties which are enjoined by the laws of society and are enforced by a

regard to interest ; if the virtuous dispositions which they ascribe to human nature signify any thing purer and more excellent, they affirm what is false, and what they must know to be false, if they are not mere dreamers wrapt up in the contemplation of the theories of the closet, and ignorant of the realities of life. What a disgusting spectacle does the history of mankind present ! It is the history of war, oppression, and blood ; of profaneness and intemperance, avarice and selfishness, falsehood and fraud. There is scarcely a page of the annals of the world which does not furnish proof of the doctrine which we have endeavoured to establish. The institutions of civil society bear testimony to it ; for what renders necessary so many definitions of personal rights, and so many securities of person and property, but the vicious dispositions of mankind, which prompt them incessantly to encroach upon others, and to promote their own interests by artifice and violence ? What embitters the relations of life, but wayward tempers and ungovernable passions ? And what makes individuals unhappy, but insatiable desires, fretfulness, impatience, discontent, remorse for the past, and fearful forebodings of the future ? Every appearance bespeaks a fallen race ; and upon a review of the crimes and miseries which abound in the world, we are led to the conclusion, that “ all flesh have corrupted their ways.” “ Lo ! this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” *

The doctrine of original sin places human nature in a very degraded light ; but this is no argument against its truth. The question is, not what we should wish it to be, but what it actually is. It could serve no purpose to represent it as pure, if it is corrupted ; possessed of power to do the will of God, if it is dead in trespasses and sins. Let us remember, that this description of human nature is applicable to ourselves. Each of us was born a sinner, and a son of perdition. What reason have we to be thankful that God has remembered us in our lost estate, and sent his Son to redeem us from it ! Through him man rises from the ruins of the fall, and in a better world shall enjoy happiness which will fear no forfeiture, and know no end.

* Eccl. vii. 29.

LECTURE XLVIII.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

ORIGIN OF REDEMPTION IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE.—MEANING OF THE TERM, COVENANT.—TRANSACTION BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON.—THE FATHER VIEWED AS A PARTY TO THE COVENANT.—THE SON AS A PARTY.—HIS CHARACTER OF REPRESENTATIVE, SURETY, AND MEDIATOR.—REMARKS ON A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

HAVING illustrated the fall of man and its fatal consequences, in some preceding Lectures, I proceed to speak of his Redemption. It is universally acknowledged, that God might have left our guilty race to perish in their sins. He was certainly not bound in justice to interfere on their behalf; but as the righteous Governor of the world, he might have proceeded to uphold the authority of his law, by executing its penalty upon the disobedient, and to give an awful example of vengeance to the intelligent inhabitants of the various provinces of his empire. His goodness did not require that he should rescue his rebellious subjects from the misery which they had brought upon themselves, because he had already given an ample display of it in their creation, and it was still exhibited in the happiness diffused through all the regions of innocence. His glory does not depend upon the manifestation of any particular attribute, but upon the manifestation of them all on proper occasions, and in full harmony. He is glorified when he bestows blessings upon the righteous, and is equally glorified when he inflicts punishment upon the

wicked. The event shews that his glory is greater in the salvation, than it would have been in the destruction, of men ; but it ought to be considered, that his glory means nothing but the manifestation of his character to his creatures, and that, as there was no necessity for such a manifestation, and it could not contribute in any degree to his felicity, it was perfectly voluntary, and might have been withheld. The only necessity which can be admitted, is that, if he shew himself at all to his creatures, the discovery shall correspond to the greatness and excellence of his nature. He might not have created a single being to contemplate and admire his perfections ; and when those who were admitted to the wonderful spectacle were guilty of dishonouring him, he might have farther revealed himself only in wrath, pouring out the vials of his indignation upon the polluted spot which they inhabited, and turning it into a scene of desolation. What would the loss of our world have been to Him in whose eyes it is as nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity ? It follows from these observations, the truth of which cannot be disputed, that the plan which he has devised for the restoration of fallen men to purity and happiness, originated in his sovereign grace.

In speaking of the work of redemption, we must ascend to its source, and begin with the consideration of that eternal agreement between the Persons of the Godhead, on which the whole dispensation of mercy to mankind is founded. It is usually called a covenant, and, on account of its origin, and of the manner in which its benefits are communicated, it is denominated the Covenant of Grace. But, in using this term, we must not give loose reins to our fancy, and invest a divine transaction with the forms and technicalities of a human bargain. This, I fear, has been sometimes done,—with the best intentions, I have no doubt, but with an unhappy effect, as it brings down a subject which should always be reflected upon with reverence and admiration, to a level with the everyday affairs of miserable mortals, and is calculated to make us forget its sublimity in the minuteness and familiarity of the detail.

The Hebrew word ברית, and the Greek word *διαθηκη*, which

are translated covenant, are used in different senses. ברית, in several places, evidently signifies an appointment or constitution, as, for example, when God speaks of "his covenant with day and night," when the idea of an agreement or stipulation cannot for a moment be admitted. It evidently bears the meaning of an appointment or ordinance, unless we choose rather to call it a promise, when God says to Noah, "I will establish my covenant with you: neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth." We must understand it as signifying a promise, when God is said to have made a covenant with Abraham, saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance." In the Christian Scriptures, the word διαθηκη occurs in all the following senses,—a promise, a command, a religious constitution or dispensation, a covenant, and perhaps in one instance or two, a testament. Our translators, I think, have confined themselves to the two latter words, using sometimes the one and sometimes the other, I might almost say arbitrarily, but without doubt injudiciously. We read, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of the mediator of a testament, and the surety of a testament, although every person must see that the word, covenant, should have been preferred, because we know well what the mediator or surety of a covenant is, while it is impossible to conceive in what sense these terms can be applied to a testament. I have made these remarks, to shew that it is not from the simple occurrence of the Hebrew or the Greek words, that we are to infer a federal transaction between God and man, or between any other parties, but from the circumstances of the case, which alone can determine in what sense the terms are employed. We may meet with them where no covenant is implied, and we may find a covenant to have been made, where neither of them is used to express it. I would farther observe, that we should beware of falling into the mistake of some superficial readers of the Scriptures, who have occasionally misinterpreted passages in which the word occurs, by explaining it of the covenant of works, or the covenant of grace, when something different is intended. I should wander from the subject of the lecture, were I to examine the various places in

which it occurs. I shall take notice only of one passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which speaks of a first covenant that was not faultless, and of a second which succeeded it.* If any man read this passage with attention, he will perceive that neither the covenant of works, nor the covenant of grace properly so called, is intended, but that these covenants are the two great dispensations of religion, of which the one was established by the ministry of Moses, and the other by the ministry of Christ. Perhaps it would have accorded better with the design of the Apostle, to have translated the original word by *dispensation* ; but it is certain, that the first covenant was the Jewish economy, and the second is the Christian.

There are various considerations, from which we may infer the existence of the covenant of grace, or of that agreement relative to the salvation of sinners, into which God entered with his Son before the foundation of the world. The character of a Surety, which is given to our Saviour in Scripture, points him out as the representative of others, and as having come under an engagement to fulfil certain terms in their name, and for their benefit. The title of the Second Adam, and the comparison, or rather the contrast, which is drawn between him and the first man, implies, that he resembled the latter, in being a federal head, by whose conduct others are affected. The frequent declarations, that he came into the world to do the will of his Father, import, that the Father had proposed a certain design to him, and that he had undertaken to accomplish it ; and this conclusion is confirmed by the important circumstance, that promises are made to him of a glorious reward. The transaction is clearly expressed in the following words : “ When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,” or rather, “ if his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand ;”† for here we have a condition and a promise. Indeed, the whole scheme of redemption involves the idea of a covenant ; while one Divine Person prescribes certain services to the other, the other performs them ; and the result is, not only his own personal exaltation, but the eternal happiness of millions whose cause

* Heb. viii. 7.

† Is. liii. 10.

he had espoused. That this transaction was anterior to the beginning of time, is evident from the assertion of an Apostle, that "eternal life was promised before the foundation of the world;" for as a promise always supposes some person to whom it is made, and the human race had then no existence, it must have been made to Christ as the representative of his people. May we not apply to this occasion the following words? "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was.—Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."* In the opinion of many, this covenant is expressly mentioned in the eighty-ninth Psalm: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations."† There is no doubt that the primary reference is to the covenant of royalty, in which the kingdom was promised to David and his descendants; but there can be no question that a greater than David is here, namely, his illustrious Son, who is sometimes called after his name, and in whom the promise has been fulfilled; for God has given to him, according to the words of the angel who appeared to his mother, "the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."‡ By reading the psalm, you will be convinced that the language is too sublime, and the things foretold are too great, to admit of being limited to any earthly monarch, or race of monarchs, however extensive their dominions, and however glorious their achievements. It is the antitype of David, the elect of God, as he is styled by Isaiah, the object of his peculiar choice and dearest love, with whom this covenant was made, by which "mercy is built up for ever, and the divine faithfulness is established in the very heavens."

It may be objected, that a covenant could not have been made between the Father and the Son from eternity, when our Lord had not assumed our nature; because the transaction supposes not only two distinct persons, but two distinct wills, and we are assured that they are, in essence, numerically one.

* Prov. viii. 23, 30, 31.

† Ver. 3, & 4.

‡ Luke i. 32, 33.

But the objection will have no weight with any one who believes the doctrine of the Trinity. It is possible, indeed, to propose questions which he cannot answer, and to start difficulties which he cannot solve; but it is worthy of attention, that the reasoning of his antagonists is not founded upon their knowledge, but upon their ignorance. They do not know, that the thing to which they object is impossible; they merely are unable to conceive its possibility, and hence draw the hasty conclusion, that it could not take place. If we admit that there are distinct persons in the Godhead, we must also admit, that the attributes of a person belong to each, namely, understanding and will. How this is consistent with the most perfect unity of the Divine essence, we may be unable to explain; but the testimony of Scripture is a sufficient foundation of faith. The Father has a will, and the Son has a will; for, on the contrary supposition, they would be in every respect the same; and the union of these two wills, with respect to the salvation of men, and the means of its accomplishment, is that covenant which is the subject of our present inquiry.

As, in every covenant, there are parties who come under mutual engagements, it is necessary to speak of the Father and the Son under this designation; and, in doing so, we can hardly avoid ideas and expressions which bear too close an analogy to the thoughts and proceedings of men; but let us not adopt them from choice, and, as I have formerly remarked, degrade the subject, by a too familiar illustration. A Divine transaction we cannot understand, except by referring to a human transaction to which it bears some resemblance; but we should exclude every thing low, every thing which is allied to human infirmity. When two men enter into a covenant, one of them makes a proposal to the other, who immediately, or after deliberation, accedes to it. We must not think, however, that, in the present case, the proposal preceded the consent in the order of time, or that it was the proposal of the one party, which turned the attention of the other to the subject, and gained his concurrence. Who does not see the impropriety of such an imagination, as the parties were Divine persons, to whom we cannot ascribe a succession of thoughts, without

virtually denying the infinity and immutability of their knowledge, and whom we cannot conceive to consult together after the manner of men, without imputing to them limited views, and a gradual accumulation of ideas? Who does not see, that a single and harmonious act of the Persons of the Trinity, was sufficient to form and to ratify all those purposes which are executed in time? If there be any expressions in Scripture, which seem to favour rather a successive process than a simultaneous decision, they are used in condescension to us, who can judge of things which we have not seen, only by things which we do see; and they ought to be explained in the same way with all those passages which represent God as actuated by human feelings and passions. As the design of this covenant was to reconcile opposite interests, the interests of heaven and of earth, on each side there was a party; the Father acting for the honour of the Godhead, and the Son for the salvation of men.

The Father must not be considered as acting simply in his personal character; but as the Son was the federal head of his people, whom he undertook to redeem, so the Father is to be viewed as representing all the Persons of the Trinity. This is not a refined speculation, or a mere subtlety, but a truth which it is necessary to know, that our ideas of the subject may be correct. Whether he be considered as demanding satisfaction for sin, or promising eternal happiness, a little attention will shew us, that he sustained a representative character. Sin was as offensive to the other Persons as to him, and their honour was equally engaged to demand its punishment; so that their concurrence was indispensably necessary in any expedient for averting the penalty from the criminals themselves. One Person, if I may speak so, could not have adopted it, without the consent of the others. The promise of eternal life, although made by the Father, is not exclusively his, but is expressive of the goodness of the whole Godhead; for that life will consist in the immediate and perpetual enjoyment of the favour and love of all its Persons. Hence, we find the Apostle John praying for grace and peace to the churches of Asia, not only "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come,"* or the Father;

* Rev. i. 4.

but from the Holy Ghost, called, on account of the variety and fulness of his gifts, "the seven Spirits which are before his throne," "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." The design of the covenant was, to vindicate the rights, and to manifest the glory, not of the Father alone, but of that nature which is common to him, and the Son, and the Spirit. By him, indeed, the terms were proposed, and the promises were made; but the terms were the result of the united counsels of the Trinity, and their united love was the source from which the blessings flow. We should beware of understanding those passages of Scripture, which ascribe our redemption to the love of the Father, as if we were indebted for it to him alone, while they are solely intended to point out the part which he sustains in this wonderful economy. Redemption originated in the love of the Godhead; but the office of appointing the Saviour, and prescribing the services to be performed, devolved upon the Father as being the first in the order of subsistence.

Without insisting further on this topic, I shall proceed to specify some particular characters, in which the Father acted when he made a covenant with his Son.

First, He acted as a God of infinite love. I anticipated what might be said on this point, in the introduction to this lecture. God first loved men, and then proceeded to provide a Saviour for them, and to settle the plan, by which the design of his mission should be accomplished. Their fall and their subsequent misery were clearly foreseen. He saw them to be without excuse, without help, and without hope; and at this moment, his eye pitied them, and his arm brought them salvation. It is, therefore, to love that we must ascribe the making of the covenant, for, as their character presented no motive, so it has appeared that he could not be influenced by any other consideration than his own benevolence. They are miserable, it is true, and he is merciful; but, although full of compassion, he is impelled by no necessity to exercise it, as is manifest from the case of fallen angels, whose doom is as lamentable as that of men, but against whom the door of hope is for ever shut. The making of the covenant was

the effect of pure goodness, and is represented as "grace given us in Christ, before the world began."

Secondly, He acted as a sovereign God, exercising his goodness according to his own pleasure, giving grace to some, and withholding it from others. His sovereignty was displayed in the fact to which we have already referred, the provision of the means of redemption for men, while fallen angels were left in a state of condemnation. Hence, the Redeemer was not appointed to enter into an alliance with the angelical nature, but to become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The reason why creatures of an inferior order were preferred to those who so much excelled them in the spirituality of their essence, and the extent of their faculties, can be found only in that uncontrolled will, which directs all things in time and eternity. His sovereignty appears also in the limiting of the benefits of the covenant to a portion of the human race; for, while the first Adam represented all his natural descendants, the second Adam was the representative only of his spiritual seed, by whom are meant those who were to be born again by his grace. Among the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, there is a "remnant according to the election of grace,"* and these "were chosen in him before the foundation of the world."† "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hath compassion on whom he will have compassion."‡

Thirdly, He acted as a holy and righteous God. While he purposed to display the exceeding riches of his grace, he also purposed to glorify his purity and justice. It was impossible that he could devise or approve of any plan for the salvation of sinners, which could reflect dishonour upon any perfection of his nature. But his truth, and justice, and holiness, would have been dishonoured, because what was due to them would have been entirely overlooked, if man had been restored to happiness, while the law which he had violated was not fulfilled, and no satisfaction was made for his offences. Against such a result, effectual precaution was taken by the selection of the Son of God, to intervene between him and sinners, and by the proposal to him of the only terms upon

* Rom. xi. 5.

† Eph. i. 4.

‡ Rom. ix. 15.

which they could be restored to favour. He was substituted in the room of the guilty, and undertook in their room to answer every claim; he was constituted a federal head, whose actions should have a legal respect to those whom he represented, and be held by the Supreme Lawgiver as a full equivalent for all that they were bound to do and to suffer. The duty imposed upon him was to assume the nature of man, in which alone the terms of a covenant made for the salvation of men could be fulfilled; and after he had assumed it, to yield obedience to the precepts of the law, and to endure the execution of its penalty. In the proposal of these terms, the inflexible moral rectitude of the Divine nature was demonstrated. At the moment when love was in full operation, its other attributes were held so sacred, that not a step was taken without securing their rights. God was willing to pardon, but he would not cancel the guilt of the sinner, unless an atonement were offered for it. He would be just in justifying the ungodly; he would make "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." Hence you perceive that the covenant could not have been made with men themselves; for to them the fulfilment of the terms would have been impossible. It could be made only with a Divine Person, who, joining himself to our nature, could bear almighty wrath, and magnify the law by perfect obedience.

The other party in the covenant of grace was the Son, who sustained a public character, and was the representative of his people. The second covenant, as we have said, could not have been made with men, because they were under a sentence of condemnation for the violation of the first. No other creature, however dignified and richly endowed with moral excellencies, was qualified to enter into a federal transaction with God in behalf of the guilty, because the terms were too high to be fulfilled even by the ability of an archangel. The universe was not then in existence; but that eye which sees the future as well as the present, did not behold in any of its provinces a single being, who was worthy to stand forth as an intercessor for our fallen race; and if a Divine Person had not appeared to undertake the arduous task, our condition would have been as hopeless as that of the apostate angels, for whom

no remedial scheme has been devised. But the Father appointed his own Son, as one who was both able and willing to befriend us ; and the office which was assigned to him he most readily accepted. “ Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart.”* These words are expressive of his cheerful compliance with the terms of the covenant, and they are recorded in the volume of the divine decree concerning the salvation of men, or of the Scriptures, which are a faithful transcript of it. Animated with zeal for the glory of his Father, and with ineffable love to perishing sinners, he “ rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth ;” that is, it gave the highest pleasure to his benevolent heart to assume the character of our Redeemer, although he was fully apprised of the humiliation and sufferings to which it would be necessary to submit, in order to accomplish his design.

In consequence of his consent to the terms of the covenant, he was constituted the head or representative of his people. He became a public person, who acted in the name of others. Some may think that, as men had not yet fallen, it would be more accurate to say, that it was then agreed that he should become their representative, as soon as their circumstances should require his interposition ; but, if we believe that the covenant was made from eternity, and that they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, there seems to be a necessity for admitting that he was invested with this character prior to the commencement of time. A new relation was formed between him and the guilty, in virtue of which he was made answerable for their guilt, and came under an obligation to perform the obedience which they owed to the law, that his righteousness might be imputed to them, as if they had obeyed and suffered in their own persons. That this doctrine has a foundation in Scripture, is evident from the comparison, formerly referred to, which Paul institutes between Christ and Adam, whom we acknowledge to have sustained a federal relation to his children. “ But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead ; much more the grace of God,

* Ps. xl. 7, 8.

and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." * I have quoted this long passage, in order to shew you how the Apostle runs a parallel between Adam and Christ, with a design to teach us at once in what respect they agree, and also in what they disagree. The disagreement consists in the difference of the effects resulting from their respective agency, the one having been the cause of guilt, and depravity, and death; the other, of righteousness and life. The agreement consists in their public character, and the representation of Christ is as clearly stated as that of the first man. In both cases the language is similar, and implies, not an accidental, but an instituted connexion between them and others, in consequence of which others are affected by what they have respectively done. By the one came condemnation, by the other justification; by the one we are made sinners, and by the other righteous. If Adam had not been our federal head, we should not have suffered by his first transgression more than by his subsequent sins, or by those of our nearer progenitors; and we may reason in the same manner, that, if Christ had not been our federal head, we should have been no more benefited by his obedience than by that of any of the saints. Its merit would have terminated in himself, and its influence upon us would have been merely that of example.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is called the Surety of the covenant. † A surety is a person who gives security for another, that he will perform something which the other is bound to do; that is, in case of failure, will perform it for

* Rom. v. 15—19.

† Heb. vii. 22.

him. The title, as given to our Saviour, implies that he came under an obligation to fulfil the condition of the covenant for his people. He undertook, as we shall afterwards see, to yield the obedience which they owed to the law, and to make satisfaction to Divine justice for their sins. Some, however, have taken a different view of the matter. Christ, they say, is surety for God to man, or has pledged himself that, to those who enter into covenant with God, the promises shall be performed. It is true that "all the promises in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God;"* or, in other words, that he has ratified them in this sense, that his blood having been shed as the price of the blessings which they contain, the performance of them ought to be confidently expected by believers. But the performance depends solely upon the justice and faithfulness of God. A surety is admitted, when a doubt or suspicion is entertained of the person for whom he is bound, and his credit is brought forward to supply what is wanting in the other. Keeping this idea of a surety in mind, we shall perceive, to say the least, a manifest impropriety in calling Christ a surety for God; for it implies that the simple promise of God is not worthy of trust, and could not be depended upon till it was confirmed by the pledged truth of another. But the Scriptures represent the word of God as the sole ground of faith. We must believe, because he is true and faithful, and will not deceive us. His word is the highest possible security; it stands in need of no confirmation; and if he has been pleased to sanction it with his oath, it is not because an oath was necessary to render it worthy of credit, but in condescension to human infirmity. "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."† The promise is as immutable as the oath; and the latter was added, not to render the former more sure in itself, but to remove our unreasonable suspicions. How could any person be a surety for God? Is his sincerity more

* 2 Cor. i. 20.

† Heb. vi. 17, 18.

fully ascertained? Has his faithfulness been more clearly established? I know not what some men mean, nor am I sure that they understand themselves, when they say that Christ was surety for God.

There are others who, granting that he was surety only for man, explain his suretiship in a manner not consonant to Scripture. He was surety, they say, that men would perform the obedience which God requires from them in the covenant of grace. In some instances, this mistake is founded upon another respecting the nature of the covenant, as being an agreement entered into between God and men themselves, in which spiritual blessings are promised upon certain conditions. I shall afterwards consider this opinion; and, in the mean time, I observe, that the notion of Christ's being surety for our obedience, receives no countenance from Scripture. He has, indeed, obtained for his people that grace by which they are enabled to obey; but the actual communication of it belongs to the Father, who has engaged in the covenant to bestow it. The obedience of believers is secured, not by any pledge which Christ has given in their name, but by the following promise of the Father: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."*

A surety for a bankrupt—for this is the only comparison which the present case will admit—is one who engages to satisfy his creditors, by paying his debts. Hence, when Jesus Christ is called the Surety of the new covenant, the meaning evidently is, that he undertook to discharge the debt which sinners owed to the law and justice of God, the debt of obedience, and the debt of suffering.

Our Saviour is farther called the Mediator of the covenant; a title which imports that he interposes between God and men with a view to reconcile them. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."† For this office he is qualified by the con-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

stitution of his person. Possessed of the Divine nature from eternity, he agreed to assume the human, that he might be allied to both parties ; and he knew how to establish a perfect harmony between the glory of God and the salvation of his guilty creatures. There are so many observations to be made upon the necessity of the Mediatorial office, the qualification of our Saviour for it, and its effects, that they would detain us too long from entering upon the other parts of the subject. I shall therefore reserve them for another occasion.

The covenant by which men are saved is one, and was made with Christ before the foundation of the world. Many Theologians, however, are of opinion, that there are two covenants connected with the salvation of men, which they call the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace, and distinguish them in the following manner. The covenant of redemption was made from eternity ; but the covenant of grace is made in time : The parties in the former are God and his Son, the parties in the latter are God and sinners : The covenant of redemption is the agreement between the Divine Persons, which we have already explained, and the condition of it is the righteousness of Christ ; the covenant of grace is the agreement which God makes with sinners in the Gospel, promising to them spiritual and eternal blessings upon the condition of faith. There is no reason to exclaim against this statement as fraught with dangerous error ; nor should we give way to that weak zeal, which is startled at modes of expression different from our own, and hastily concludes, that they are meant to convey a difference of meaning. If we examine it with candour, we shall find that, in substance, it accords with our own views of the subject. I acknowledge, that there does not appear to be any ground in Scripture for the notion of two covenants. The blood of Christ is called "the blood of the covenant," not "of the covenants," as we may presume it would have been called, if it had been the condition of the covenant of redemption, and the foundation of the covenant of grace. The truth is, that what those Divines call the covenant of grace, is merely the administration of what they call the covenant of redemption, for the purpose of communicating its blessings

to those for whom they were intended; and cannot be properly considered as a covenant, because it is not suspended upon a proper condition, as we shall presently see. At the same time it is right to remark, that it is frequently spoken of as a covenant, and is said to be made with men themselves. "I will make with you an everlasting covenant." * "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord." † "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." ‡ I may add, that the Confession of Faith, which we receive as a standard of doctrine, although we sometimes beg leave to dissent from some of its expressions, gives the same view of the covenant of grace: "Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by the covenant of works, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; whereby he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." * Still I am persuaded that the doctrine taught in our church, which has been adopted also by many others, is more accurate, that the covenant by which we are saved is one, whether you call it the covenant of redemption, or the covenant of grace, for neither the one name nor the other is found in the Scripture; and that what some call the covenant of grace, is nothing but the dispensation by which the benefits that Christ purchased by his obedience and death are imparted to believers.

The use of the term *condition*, in reference to the covenant of grace, may also be considered as objectionable, because it commonly means something, which when done by one party, gives a right to what was promised by the other. To call faith, therefore, the condition of the covenant, may seem to imply, that there is merit in faith, which entitles us to salvation. This, however, is far from being the meaning of those whose sentiments we are at present considering. The term is used by them in a lower sense, and simply signifies something which goes before another, and without which

* Is. lv. 3. † Heb. viii. 10. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. || West. Conf. c. vii. § 3.

the other cannot be obtained. They do not assign merit to faith, but simply precedence. According to them, faith is the condition of the covenant, because the promise of salvation will be performed to none but believers. They hold as well as we, that it is only the means of obtaining an interest in the salvation offered in the Gospel; and that it is itself an effect of grace, being wrought in the heart by the Spirit of regeneration. If they err, then, it is not in sentiment, but in language; and we should be cautious in affirming that they err even here, lest the censure should recoil upon persons of whom we are accustomed to speak with great veneration, and to whom some are disposed to look up as almost infallible oracles, the framers of those public standards which we have adopted; for they did not hesitate to make use of the obnoxious term. "The grace of God," they say in the Larger Catechism, "is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces." * As, however, the word, condition, has been often employed in an unscriptural sense, and is apt to suggest false ideas to the ignorant and unwary, it is more prudent to lay it aside.

I remark by the way, that the vehemence with which some in our church have opposed the use of the term, while they might have known that nothing improper was meant by it, is altogether unjustifiable. It arose either from ignorance that the term is found in our standards, or from dishonest zeal, which condemns in an antagonist what it tolerates in a friend. And here we may remark the improper conduct of most churches in reference to their standards. Having once adopted them, they regard them as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which must never be altered. As if their infallibility were ascertained, they are never subjected to revision; whereas they should be frequently revised, that such changes may be made in sentiment and language as are suggested by more correct views of the Scriptures. Then

* Quest. 32.

we should have avoided the awkwardness of having standards to which we assent without reserve or qualification, but in which there are expressions that we cannot use without incurring the suspicion of error. I know only of one exception from this practice, so unbecoming Protestants and daily students of the Scriptures.*

We cannot exercise the same indulgence towards every view which has been given by Theologians of the covenant of grace, for, by some, it has been grossly misrepresented, so that nothing remains but the name. According to them, the design of the death of Christ was to make God reconcileable to sinners, and to procure a new covenant with them, in which pardon and eternal life are promised on the condition of faith, repentance, and obedience. If sometimes they call faith alone the condition of the covenant, we must beware of being imposed upon by the sound of a word, to which they have affixed a peculiar meaning favourable to their own system; for it does not signify, as in the language of other divines, reliance upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, but such a belief of the truth as leads to obedience, and derives all its value and efficacy from its effects. Having erected this fanciful structure, they give it the name of the new covenant, the gospel covenant, or the covenant of grace, because they pretend God has manifested his grace in it by proposing easier terms. In the first covenant, he exacted perfect obedience; but now he requires only sincere obedience, in consideration of the infirmity of man, who, being enfeebled by sin, and surrounded with temptations, is incapable of complying with the strict demands of the original law. The remedy, in this case, is repentance for defects and transgressions; and, through the mediation of Christ, God accepts of our upright endeavours to serve him. But, whatever name may be given to this imaginary transaction, it is truly and formally a covenant of works, the nature of which consists in suspending the reward upon certain performances, whether they be many or few, difficult or easy. That is a covenant of works, which makes works of any kind the condition of the promise. The

* It is believed that the exception here alluded to, was that of the Protestant Church of France, which revised its standards at every period of two years.

words of the Apostle are express, and expose the vanity and criminality of this attempt to join together two things, which are, and ever will be opposed to each other: "If it be by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work." * There are only two laws by which men can hope to be saved, the law of works, and the law of faith; of which the former says, "Do this, and thou shalt live;" but this is the language of the latter, "To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." † The scheme which we are now considering, is a clumsy and audacious attempt to blend together two methods of salvation, which are essentially different. It supposes, besides, what is absolutely impossible, that God may relax the strictness of his law, and require less from men than he once did, because they are become unable to give more. But how could God demand less, if he be the same holy and righteous Being that he was in the beginning? The inability of men to yield perfect obedience, is not owing to him but to themselves, and consists in unwillingness, in aversion of heart. It does not consequently deprive him of his rights, nor would it be worthy of his character to lower the standard because his subjects are dissatisfied with it, and by doing so, to give his sanction to their unjustifiable revolt. Are they not commanded "to love him with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength?" and "to love their neighbour as themselves?" And is not this the whole of the law; the utmost that was ever required? "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." ‡ I add, that, although it were granted that faith, repentance, and sincere obedience are now accepted instead of perfect righteousness, the covenant, of which these were the condition, would not deserve to be called a covenant of grace on account of the easiness of its terms. None will deem them easy but the man who is ignorant of himself, and of the total corruption of human nature. To us, in whose flesh there dwells no good thing, they are as impossible as perfect obedience. The person who is reduced to the last stage of

* Rom. xi. 6.

† Ib. iv. 5.

‡ Ib. iii. 31.

weakness by a mortal disease, is as incapable of raising a weight of ten pounds, as a weight of a hundred. I conclude, therefore, that this view of the covenant of grace is erroneous, has no foundation in Scripture, is contrary to the moral attributes of God, fosters pride, overthrows the gospel of Christ, and is calculated to deceive sinners with the vain hope of obtaining salvation by their own efforts, while the terms which it proposes are not more within the compass of their ability than the strictest and most extensive demands.

LECTURE XLIX.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

CONDITION OF THE COVENANT.—PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE ENGAGEMENT TO PERFORM IT INTO WHICH THE SON ENTERED.—THE CONDITION INCLUDED, FIRST, PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO THE PRECEPTS OF THE LAW; SECONDLY, SATISFACTORY SUFFERINGS FOR THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE.—PROMISES OF THE COVENANT CONSIDERED AS THEY RESPECTED CHRIST HIMSELF AND AS THEY RESPECTED THE ELECT.—VIEW OF THE BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE ELECT.

A COVENANT is an agreement between two parties, who come under mutual engagements. Something is to be done by one of the parties, in consequence of which the other party binds himself to do another thing in return. When a master, for example, enters into an agreement or covenant with a servant, he prescribes certain duties to be performed by the servant, and promises to recompense him with suitable wages. By consenting to the compact, the servant becomes bound to perform the stipulated work, and the master is bound to bestow the reward when the term of labour is finished. In a covenant therefore, there are two parts, a condition with a promise; and sometimes a penalty is added to be executed in case of failure. The two former are found in the covenant of grace; and I now proceed to consider them in their order.

The condition of a covenant is that work or service which gives the performer a right to the promised reward. In order to learn what was the condition of the covenant of grace, let us remember that Jesus Christ, by becoming the surety of his people, took upon himself those terms which it would have

been necessary for them to fulfil, in order to obtain the favour of God, and a title to happiness. What these were, will appear, if we consider the original obligation under which man was placed by his Creator, and the situation into which he had brought himself by disobedience. The first covenant enjoined perfect obedience to the Divine law as the condition of life; and the will of the Maker of the covenant was signified to Adam, in the prohibition to taste the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As the prohibition was not founded on the nature of things, but on the sovereign will of God, it was a clear intimation to our first parent, that his hope of continued and augmented felicity was suspended upon his unreserved submission to the authority of his Creator. He was to obey him in every thing, and to ask no reason but his command; he was to live for him alone, and to consecrate all his powers to his service. Such was the original condition of the covenant; but something more is now demanded, in consequence of the melancholy change which has taken place in the circumstances of man. As he was a fallible creature, a penalty was added in the beginning to enforce the precept, and to vindicate the honour of the Lawgiver if the covenant was violated. To this penalty, Adam became obnoxious as soon as he had sinned; and his descendants are under the sentence of death, which was first pronounced upon him.

Hence we perceive what must have been, and actually was, the condition of the covenant of grace. For what was requisite that fallen man might enjoy peace with his offended Maker, and regain the happiness which he had lost by transgression? Although the first covenant had been broken, its claims subsisted in full force. It still demanded that perfect obedience which man had failed to yield, and in consequence of this failure, farther demanded that its penalty or curse should be executed upon the guilty. As man could not himself satisfy these claims, they devolved upon his surety, and that too, without any abatement; for, to suppose them to have been relaxed, on account of the dignity of the person, and his intimate relation to the Father, is to suppose God to have been less holy and just in the covenant of grace, than in the covenant of works. You see, then, that the fulfilment of the

terms of the one covenant, was the express condition of the other. All that was required from sinners, was required from their Saviour. The second covenant could not be established but by an exact compliance with the requisitions of the first. And the demands of the first covenant were enlarged by the breach of it ; for, from man in a state of innocence, it required only obedience to its precepts ; but from guilty man, and from Christ his representative, it required not only obedience but suffering.

Before I proceed to explain, more distinctly, the condition of the covenant, there are some remarks to be made upon the engagement into which our Saviour entered to perform it. The engagement was perfectly voluntary on his part ; there existed no prior obligation, nor was there any authority by which he could be compelled to it. As a divine person, he was subject to no law, and acknowledged no superior ; for, although we call the Father the first Person of the Trinity, we do not assign to him any pre-eminence of dignity and power, but merely state the order of subsistence. To suppose the Son to be inferior to him, would be inconsistent with the belief, that the same individual essence, and consequently the same perfections, belong equally to both. He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”* Supreme dominion is necessarily attached to true and proper Divinity. The Son is “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” With this supreme authority which we attribute to him, the engagement into which he entered to perform the condition of the covenant, was not incompatible. It was an act of his will, concurring with his Father in the scheme of redemption, and consenting to execute the part of the work which was allotted to him ; but it did not imply a present subjection to the authority of his Father, or the immediate assumption of an inferior station. It was merely a purpose thus expressed, to assume that station at the proper period ; a promise to descend to the earth in the fulness of time, and to appear in the form of a servant. By this promise of obedience, to be afterwards performed in the nature of man, the Son, as God, no more subjected himself to the Father, than the Father subjected

* Phil. ii. 6.

himself to the Son, by promising to give him a right to demand the stipulated reward. I would not, however, be understood to insinuate, that he was not, from eternity, constituted our Surety, and that he only assumed his character at a posterior date. If grace was given to us in Christ before the world began, and the elect were then chosen in him to salvation, there seems to be a necessity for admitting, that a relation was then formed between him and his people; but it could not immediately have all the effect which it afterwards had, when he was manifested in the flesh. But it gave him a present interest in them; it was the foundation of that gracious economy which commenced after the fall, and which he carried on by his Spirit, and by the external ministry of angels and prophets; and it was the ground on which God pardoned sinners, and bestowed spiritual blessings upon them, prior to the incarnation and death of his Son.

I shall afterwards take an opportunity to speak of Christ as Mediator, and of the mysterious constitution of his person. It is certain that he is Mediator in both natures, the divine and the human; and hence it may seem to follow, that in both he is subject to the Father; and the difficulty remains, how one Divine Person could be subject to another. The proper solution of it, I think, is to consider the subjection, so far as the divine nature was concerned, as merely economical; and, being voluntary on the part of the Son, submitted to only for a time, and to promote a particular design, it manifestly does not imply any degradation. He did not surrender his Divinity, or any of his perfections, or any of his rights, but solely consented to sustain, for a season, a subordinate office, for the glory of the Godhead, and the salvation of a perishing world. Retaining his original glory, he was pleased to draw a veil over it in the eyes of men; to empty himself, according to the strong language of Scripture, and take upon him the form of a servant. The case would be similar, as far, at least, as human can resemble Divine things, if the son of a king, who was associated with him in the throne, should condescend, for reasons of state, to receive and execute the orders of his father. His title to supreme authority would be unimpaired, and, in fact, he

would actually retain it undiminished, although he had waived the exercise of it for a time. The subjection of the human nature to the Father, was real, like that of any other creature to the Creator. It was different, indeed, from any other creature, in this respect, that the second person of the Trinity had united it to himself; but, in consequence of this union, there was no communication of properties from the one nature to the other, so that the human was deified, and raised above the authority of law. Although subsisting in the same hypostasis with the divine nature of the Son, it continued perfectly distinct, and was consequently under the same moral obligation, which binds the highest as well as the lowest creature to obey the will of the Author of its being. We may therefore say, that Christ as Mediator was subject to his Father, using the word, subject, in such a sense as is not inconsistent with his Supreme Divinity, and always remembering, that his subjection in the divine nature was voluntary and temporary, but in the human nature is necessary and perpetual. The necessity of maintaining the subjection of his whole person as sustaining the mediatorial character to the Father is obvious, because the acts of his human nature alone would not have accomplished the redemption of his people. A higher agency was requisite to fulfil the terms of the covenant. The Son of God must be made under the law, and the Lord of glory must be crucified.

I now proceed to speak more particularly of the condition of the covenant, which our Surety fulfilled. In many theological books, we are taught that it comprehended the three following things, holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin by sufferings and death. To answer these demands, our Redeemer assumed human nature without a stain, gave perfect obedience to the precepts of the law, and shed his blood as an atonement for sin. I am disposed to call in question the accuracy of this statement. To the second and third particular I have no objection, and believe that they were truly the terms of the covenant; but I do not see that the first was any part of the condition. My reason for dissenting in this instance from the common opinion, is that, besides satisfaction to divine justice, which is now required in consequence of sin,

no other thing can be conceived to be the condition of the covenant of grace, which was not the condition of the covenant of works. Now, holiness of nature was not part of that condition, because man already was possessed of it when the covenant was made, and all therefore that could be required of him was, that he should act agreeably to the principles and dispositions with which his Maker had endowed him. A condition bears a reference to the future, and implies something to be done. No man enters into a covenant with another, on the ground of what he at present is, but on the ground of what he promises to be or to do. God did not promise eternal life to Adam, because he had a holy nature, but in the event of his obeying the command which he had given him respecting the tree of knowledge. The only condition prescribed to him was obedience, and it is the only condition, therefore, which could be prescribed to his Surety. It is true indeed that man, having lost the holiness of his nature, is bound to account for it; but this is done, not by substituting the holiness of the human nature of Christ as a compensation for the want of it, but by his atonement on the cross for all sin original and actual; and being indispensably necessary to communion with God and the enjoyment of heaven, it is restored to the elect by the operation of his Spirit. The holiness of his human nature, I consider rather as a qualification for the work which he was appointed to perform, than as any part of the work itself. It was necessary that it should be a holy thing, not only because an impure nature would not have been admitted into personal union with the divine, but because it would not have been acceptable to God, or capable of performing a single action of which he would approve. Its holiness was an indispensable pre-requisite, according to his own saying, "First make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good." The Father therefore engaged to provide it, and actually gave it to him at the appointed time. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me."* These are the words of our Saviour, and they imply, that the human nature was given to him by his Father that he might have something to offer, name-

* Heb. x. 5.

ly, the immaculate oblation of his body and soul. We believe that all that our Saviour did and suffered in the character of our Surety was meritorious of salvation. But there is no merit in the simple possession of a gift, however excellent in itself; and merit arises from the proper use of the gift, from the use of it according to the will of the giver, and for the purposes which he had in view in bestowing it. The holiness of the human nature of Christ was a gift of his Father, by which he was qualified for his work, and in receiving it, considered as a man, he was passive. There was therefore no place for merit, although his unspotted purity was in the highest degree pleasing in the eyes of his Father. His merit consisted in the use of the gift, in retaining his holy nature amidst all the temptations of Satan and the world, and in exerting its faculties in the service of his Father. It could not therefore be a part of the condition of the covenant, which consisted in active duties, in doing something which God had enjoined, and to which he had promised a reward. For these reasons, I reject the first particular which is usually mentioned as included in the condition of the covenant, and shall confine your attention to the second and the third.

First, The Father required from our Surety perfect obedience to the precepts of the law. Such obedience was demanded from man under the first covenant; and as the obligation of the moral law is not founded on occasional circumstances, but on the nature and relation of God and his creatures, the same obedience must have been required in the second. There was no possibility that man could obtain happiness, unless this obedience was performed by himself, or by another whom the Lawgiver should admit to act in his name. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,"* is the answer which the law returns to the sinner, who asks what he shall do to inherit that life. It is evident that the same obedience was required from our Saviour, when acting as our federal head. As he is said to have been made under the law, when he was made of a woman, so we hear him expressing, in the view of his future incarnation, his intention to fulfil it: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law

* Mat. xix. 17.

is within my heart.” * He knew and loved the law, and he came into the world to honour it by submission to its authority. He was always ready to recognise his obligation to obedience. By receiving baptism from the hands of his forerunner, he solemnly and publicly dedicated himself to the service of his Father ; and his whole conduct was a commentary upon his own declaration : “ I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day ; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” † Accordingly he diffused on all around him the light of holiness, as well as of heavenly doctrine. In every relation and condition of life, in his conduct towards friends and enemies, in peace and in trouble, before the eyes of the public and in retirement with his own followers, he exhibited a perfect example of it. He glorified God, he loved man, he went about doing good. As he boldly challenged his enemies to convict him of sin, so he reckoned with the utmost confidence upon the approbation of his Father. “ He that sent me, is with me ; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.” ‡

It may be objected, that the obedience of Christ, however perfect, could not be available for us since he owed it for himself, because as man he was subject to the same moral law, which is obligatory upon all mankind. Its merit, therefore, could not be imputed to others, but must have terminated upon himself. Different answers may be returned to this objection. It may be said in the first place, that, although it was performed in the human nature, it was the obedience of our Mediator in his whole person, and consequently, that he did not owe it for himself, because, being the Son of God, he was not subject to the law. It may be alleged indeed, that as Mediator he was subject to the Father in the sense already explained ; but it should be considered that, this subjection being voluntary, the obedience which resulted from it was not necessary for himself, and could therefore be accepted in behalf of those for whose benefit it was intended. It may be said again, that even his human nature owed no obedience for itself, in order to its admission

* Ps. xl. 8.

† John ix. 4, 5.

‡ Ib. viii. 29.

into heaven, but in virtue of its union to his Divine person, was immediately entitled to all the glory and felicity of which it was capable. Whatever obedience, therefore, he performed upon earth and in a state of humiliation and trial, was not upon his own account; and hence, according to justice, the benefit of it might be transferred to his people. It may be said once more, that, although the human nature of Christ was necessarily subject to the law of God as the eternal rule of righteousness to all intelligent creatures, yet it was from choice that it became subject to the law in that particular form, in which it was binding upon men. To them it bore the form of a covenant; but this form was incidental and temporary, and would have ceased as soon as the condition was fulfilled. "The obligation of the law under this consideration," says Dr Owen, "ceaseth when we come to the enjoyment of the reward. It obligeth us no more formally by its command, Do this and live, when the life promised is enjoyed. In this sense, the Lord Christ was not made subject to the law for himself, nor did yield obedience unto it for himself. For he was not obliged unto it by virtue of his created condition. Upon the first instant of the union of his natures, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, he might, notwithstanding the law that he was made subject unto, have been stated in glory. For he that was the object of all divine worship, needed not any new obedience to procure for him a state of blessedness. And had he naturally, merely by virtue of his being a creature, been subject to the law in this sense, he must have been so eternally, which he is not. For those things which depend solely upon the natures of God and the creature, are eternal and immutable. Wherefore, as the law in this sense was given unto us, not absolutely, but with respect unto a future state and reward; so the Lord Christ did voluntarily subject himself unto it for us, and his obedience thereunto was for us, and not for himself." * I may subjoin to these answers to the objection, that it cannot be consistently advanced by those who acknowledge the representation of Adam, and believe that, although he was subject to the law

* Owen on Justification, chap. xii.

on his own account, and bound to obey its precepts for himself, yet, if he had fulfilled the terms of the covenant, his descendants would have been entitled to the promised reward on the ground of his obedience. If his obedience could have been considered as virtually the obedience of his posterity, there is evidently no reason why the obedience of Christ should not have been accepted on the behalf of his people, and have entitled them to the reward promised in the covenant of grace, even although it were true that he was himself personally bound to perform it. The will of God was sufficient to establish a relation between the acts of the representative and the represented, in the one case as well as in the other.

I proceed to observe in the second place, That the Father required from our Surety satisfaction for the sins of his people. When a covenant is broken, the promise made by the other party is no longer binding, and the penalty, if there be one, is inflicted. Hence man, having failed to perform the stipulated obedience, became subject to the curse; and the justice of God demanded the execution of it. There were only two ways in which he could escape his righteous doom; either by an act of mercy on the part of his Judge remitting the punishment, or by the substitution of another person, who should bear it in his room. To the first method were opposed the purity and rectitude of the Divine nature, which holds sin in abhorrence, and will not permit it to pass with impunity. The second was therefore adopted. Let it be here observed that, while the claim of the law to a full compensation for the wrong which it had sustained was established, there was in the present case a relaxation of its severity, by the admission of a substitute. It is evident that its original sanction required the punishment of the transgressors. "In the day thou eatest thereof," the law said to Adam, "thou shalt surely die, * and not another for thee;" and on this ground he and all his descendants might have been called upon to answer, each for himself. The law itself does not know a substitute, and would not admit one. It was owing, therefore, to a gracious dispensation of the Lawgiver that Jesus Christ was

* Gen. ii. 17.

constituted the Surety of sinners. The Sovereign will adopted this expedient as the only one by which our ruined race could be restored, and the glory of all his perfections could be displayed in our salvation. As the execution of the penalty upon the actual transgressors would have involved them in total and irretrievable perdition, a Substitute was appointed who was able to bear it. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." * The satisfaction of Christ was an eminent part of the condition of the covenant, and is mentioned as such in several places of Scripture: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," or rather, "when his soul shall offer a sin-offering, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." † The condition enjoined is, that he should be an expiatory sacrifice; and the promise is, that he should be rewarded with immortal life, and the redemption of his spiritual seed. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." ‡ The doctrine of imputation by the transference of our sins to the Saviour, and of his righteousness to us, is plainly taught in these words. He who was perfectly immaculate could be made sin only by imputation; which does not imply that he was polluted with sin, or accounted an actual transgressor, but merely that he was made answerable for the sins of those whom he had undertaken to represent. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." || The curse is the sentence dooming the transgressor to punishment; and Christ was made a curse, by being subjected to that sentence, in consequence of his voluntary assumption of the office of a surety.

How, it may be asked, could the sufferings of Christ be satisfactory for the offences of others? We acknowledge in this case a relaxation of the law; but does it not defeat the ends of justice? It is not, perhaps, sufficient to say that he was legally one with them; for, although this is true, and was necessary to his suffering in their room, he was in reality

* Js. liii. 6. † 1b. liii. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. || Gal. iii. 13.

a totally different person, and his sufferings were not literally theirs. If the ends of justice had required that the transgressors of the law should undergo the penalty in their own persons, it is plain that Christ would have died in vain, because substitution could not have been admitted. But, if it was only required that compensation should be made to the law for the injury which it had sustained, the sufferings of Christ might be available for us, as we see in the case of a debtor whose creditor is fully satisfied by the payment of the surety, although the debtor himself should be for ever insolvent. The death of Christ, in consequence of his superior dignity, established, still more than the death of the guilty would have done, the authority of the law, and fully demonstrated that its precepts are just as well as holy; that its penalty is not a vain threatening, but that between sin and punishment there is an inseparable connexion; that God is righteous, and shall not be disobeyed with impunity. This is all that would have been accomplished by the execution of the penalty upon sinners themselves, and all that was necessary to uphold the moral government of God. There was a mixture of grace in this dispensation; but it did not set aside, or in any degree impair the rights of the law.

But how, it may be asked again, could the sufferings of Jesus Christ satisfy for the sins of "a great multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues?" The common answer is, that the transcendent value of his sufferings was the consequence of the dignity of his nature; and it seems to be sufficient. His sufferings were limited in degree, because the nature in which he endured them was finite; but their merit was infinite, because the suffering nature was united to the Son of God. An idea, however, seems to prevail, that his sufferings were the same in degree with those to which his people were liable; that he suffered not only in their room, but that *quantum* of pain and sorrow which, if he had not interposed, they should have suffered in their own persons through eternity; and so far has this notion been carried by some, that they have maintained that his sufferings would have been greater or less, if there had been one more or one fewer to be redeemed.

According to this system, the value of his sufferings arose, not from the dignity of his person, but from his power. The use of his Divine person in this case, was not to enhance the merit of his sufferings, but to strengthen him to bear them. If this is true, it was not necessary that he should have taken human nature into personal union with himself; it was only necessary that he should have sustained it; and this he could have done although it had subsisted by itself. That the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus were greater than those which a mere mortal could have borne, will be readily granted; but, although it does not become us to set limits to Omnipotence, yet we cannot conceive him, I think, considered simply as a man, to have sustained the whole load of Divine vengeance, which would have overwhelmed countless myriads of men through an everlasting duration. By its union to himself, his human nature did not become infinite in power; it was not even endowed with the properties of an angel, but continued the same *essentially* with human nature in all other men. Nor is the supposition which we are considering at all necessary; for as, in virtue of the union, the sufferings of his human nature were the sufferings of the Son of God, they acquired an incalculable intensity of value, and were equivalent to the sufferings of all his people, as his obedience was equivalent to the obedience which they were bound individually to perform. The will of God determined their degree, and the dignity of his person imparted a worth to them above all price. This view of the subject does not occur, I believe, in some of our Theological systems, and in our popular books; but I persuade myself that it is just, and is preferable to the loose declamatory expressions which we often hear with respect to the greatness of his sufferings.

I have now shewn you what was the condition of the covenant of grace. It included the obedience of our Surety to the precepts of the law, and his satisfactory sufferings. These constitute his *righteousness*, by which we are justified; a term of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, which signifies his perfect conformity to the law, in all its demands.

I now proceed to speak of the promises of the covenant. They are distinguished into two classes; the one including

the promises which immediately respected Christ himself; and the other, the promises which respect his elect.

In relation to Christ himself, God promised to furnish him with all necessary preparation for the arduous work which he had undertaken to perform. The promise of a human nature, in which he might fulfil the law, is referred to in the following words, which were formerly quoted: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;"* and it was performed when the power of the Highest overshadowed the blessed virgin, and the holy thing which was born of her was called the Son of God. The promise of the holy and supernatural endowments by which that nature would be fitted for the discharge of its duty, is thus expressed by the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."† In the writings of the same prophet, our Saviour himself describes, in figurative language, his preparation for his office by the power of his Father:—"The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."‡ These promises were performed by the abundant communication, the communication not by measure, of the Holy Ghost in his graces and gifts; of which there was a visible sign at his baptism, when the Spirit descended like a dove, and rested upon him.

Again, the Father promised to support him in his work. It was a work attended with such difficulties, that created power, although unimpaired by sin, would have been totally inadequate to it; and it was to be performed in human nature, which had failed in an easier undertaking, even when possessed of untainted innocence, and of faculties in all their freshness and vigour. Our Saviour was encouraged by the assurance

* Heb. x. 5.

† Isaiah xi. 2, 3.

‡ Ib. xlix. 1—3.

of the Divine presence and assistance: "Behold my Servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.—He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.—I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."* Accordingly we find him firmly depending upon these promises on the most trying occasions. "The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."† In the spirit of unshaken faith, when his enemies were conspiring against him, and his few friends were about to forsake him, he said to his disciples, "Behold the hour cometh, when ye shall be scattered, every one to his place, and shall leave me alone; but I am not alone, for the Father is with me."‡

It is evident that these promises were not suspended upon the condition of the covenant, like those which will be afterwards mentioned, and may therefore be considered as belonging to the covenant only in this sense, that it was solely with a view to it that they were made. From their nature, some of them anticipated all obedience upon the part of our Surety, and instead of being the reward of his services, were intended to assist and encourage him in performing them. The only stipulation implied in them, was that, if Christ should undertake the work of our salvation, his Father would provide him with the means of accomplishing it; and they are properly expressive of the share which he would take in the execution of the plan that he had devised in concert with his Son.

Once more, The Father promised to confer a glorious reward upon his Son, and this promise manifestly depended upon the performance of the condition. Under this head, we may consider, first, the promise that, when his work was finished, he should be invested with honour and power: "The

* Is. xlii. 1, 4, 6, 7.

† Is. i. 7.

‡ John xvi. 32.

Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." * These promises were performed after his resurrection from the dead, when God gave "him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." † We may consider, in the second place, the promises which respected the salvation of his people; for this is an eminent part of his reward, as it was with a design to accomplish their salvation that he suffered and died: "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." ‡ Such would be the happy result of his propitiatory sacrifice. Having triumphed over death, he should behold a numerous offspring arising in all ages to call him blessed, and rejoicing in the invaluable benefits which he had purchased for them with his blood: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." ||

I proceed to speak of the promises which immediately respect the elect. I begin with observing, that they were made in the first instance to Christ, with whom alone God transacted in the covenant of grace. In every case which admits of a representative, the other party addresses himself to him, either in proposing the terms, or in stipulating the reward. Hence it is plain, that the promises were made to our Surety; and it is farther evident from the consideration, that the persons, in whose favour they were to be performed, had then no actual existence, as the transaction took place before the foundation of the world: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." § If eternal life was promised before the creation, it follows that it was promised to Christ, who was then constituted the federal head of his people. It was promised to him, not simply as a Divine person, but as sustaining a public character, and stand-

* Ps. cx. 1. Ps. lxxxix. 27. Ps. lxxii. 8. † Phil. ii. 9—11.

‡ Is. liii. 10.

|| Ps. ii. 8.

§ Tit. i. 2.

ing in an intimate relation to those whom he was appointed to redeem; and therefore, the promise may be considered as virtually made to them, on whom the blessing will be bestowed at the stated season, and in the proper order.

Eternal life comprehends all the blessings of the covenant of grace. The Scriptures make mention of it as the great end of the incarnation and sufferings of Christ: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." * It is emphatically represented as *the* promise, to denote not merely its pre-eminence, but its comprehensiveness: "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." † By reflecting upon the subject, you will perceive that all the blessings of grace and glory are included in it. The enjoyment of it is not confined to the future state; it commences in this world, when the believer not only obtains a title to immortal happiness, but is illuminated, and sanctified, and comforted by the Spirit of grace, and it will be perfected in the world to come. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." ‡

It will be proper to take a distinct view of the blessings promised to the elect; and not to multiply particulars, I shall content myself with the following summary.

First, The Father promised to regenerate the elect. When the covenant was made with Christ in their name, they were considered as persons dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God, unwilling to return to him, and incapable of faith, by which alone an interest in the righteousness of the Surety is obtained. In this state they are when the gospel is preached to them, and its grace is first displayed by infusing into their souls a principle of spiritual life: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind,

* John iii. 16.

† 1 John ii. 26.

‡ 1 John v. 11—13.

and write them in their hearts.”* In consequence of this promise, the Holy Ghost enters into them, and, by his almighty power, effects that change which we call regeneration, and which is the commencement of a new life of holiness and peace. It appears from their state prior to this change, that the performance of the promise precedes all qualification, and all dispositions preparatory to the reception of the grace which it communicates.

Secondly, The Father promised to forgive their sins. This blessing consists in the repeal of the sentence, which was pronounced upon them as transgressors of the law, and annuls the obligation to suffer the penalty, so that they are as safe as if they had not offended. It, therefore, holds a distinguished place among the blessings of the covenant: “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” It was procured by the atonement of Christ, which satisfied the demands of justice, and is enjoyed by those on whom his blood is sprinkled, or who obtain by faith an interest in his propitiatory sacrifice. It is a comprehensive blessing, which has a retrospective and a prospective influence; for not only is the guilt of their past and present offences cancelled, but they are secured against the imputation of the guilt of such sins as they may afterwards commit: “There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”†

Thirdly, The Father promised to sanctify the elect. This blessing is virtually comprehended in the promise of regeneration, which we have already considered; for “the writing of the law upon their hearts” signifies, at least, the communication of the first principles of holiness. The seed thus sown by the hand of God, he waters and cherishes, that it may bring forth fruit in abundance: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”‡ When Paul prayed that the Thessalonians might be “sanctified wholly,” and that their “whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,”|| he

* Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.

‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

† Rom. viii. 1.

|| 1 Thess. v. 23.

rested his hope of an answer upon the faithfulness of God in the performance of his promises: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." * Holiness is an essential ingredient in the eternal life, which is the great blessing of the covenant, and it is necessary to prepare us for the pure enjoyment of the heavenly state.

Fourthly, The Father promised to preserve the elect in a state of grace, from which they would fall if they were left to themselves: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." † This promise consists of two parts. First, God engages not to forsake them, for his affection is not mutable and transitory, like that of men, but he rests in his love. Hence he says in another place, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." ‡ Secondly, he puts his fear in their hearts, that they may not forsake him. Their faith may be feeble, but it shall not utterly fail; their holiness may lose its lustre, but it shall not be extinguished; sin may occasionally prevail against them, but it shall not recover the dominion. There is a spark under the ashes, which the breath of heaven will kindle into a flame; there is a living principle which, protected from danger, and cherished by secret communications from heaven, will acquire full vigour and activity in a better world. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life." §

Lastly, The Father promised to glorify the elect. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." || This promise includes many particulars; a happy death, a blessed resurrection, a public justification at the tribunal of Christ, admission into heaven, and the fruition of unbounded and never-ending felicity. When the promise is

* 1 Thess. v. 24.

† Jer. xxxii. 40.

‡ Isaiah liv. 10.

§ John iv. 14.

|| Isaiah xxxv. 10.

performed to all whom Christ has redeemed, the design of the covenant will be fully accomplished; and the Mediator having delivered up the kingdom to the Father, or brought to a close the administration over which he presides, "God will be all in all." *

There are several other points relative to the covenant, upon which your time will not permit me to enter at present, and I shall therefore reserve them for another Lecture.

* 1 Cor. xv. 28.

LECTURE L.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

FARTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROMISES OF THE COVENANT.—THE COVENANT OF GRACE ADMITTED OF NO PENALTY.—THE ADMINISTRATION OR DISPENSATION OF IT COMMITTED TO CHRIST.—VIEW OF IT AS A TESTAMENT.—DISPENSATION OF THE COVENANT BEFORE AND SUBSEQUENT TO THE COMING OF CHRIST.

HAVING pointed out, in the preceding Lecture, some of the promises which were made to Jesus Christ, as the Representative and Surety of his people, I proceed to make a few general observations upon them.

The first observation is, That they originated in the love of God. They are varied expressions of it; diversified aspects which it bears towards man, considered as guilty, polluted, and miserable; and the ultimate design of them is his restoration to purity and happiness. In them, God is manifested to be love. They are the overflowings of his heart towards his fallen offspring, and awaken a more impressive sense of his infinite benevolence, when we view them in connexion with the wonderful expedient which has been adopted that his goodness might have access to us, all the promised blessings being conveyed by the substitution and sufferings of his Son. “How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the

river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life : in thy light shall we see light." *

The second observation is, That the promises bear a relation to Christ, not only because they were made primarily to him, but because the performance of them was suspended upon his fulfilling the condition of the covenant. A question has been agitated among Theologians, whether, as they express it, the promises were founded on the offices of Christ ; that is, in more intelligible language, whether it was owing to his mediation that the promises were made ? This may be considered as one of those subtle questions which have been brought forward to exercise ingenuity, and furnish a subject of debate, without being of much practical utility. In the usual manner, Divines have arranged themselves on opposite sides, some affirming and others denying. By those who are accounted orthodox, it has been judged agreeable to truth to maintain, that they were not founded on the offices of Christ, but were perfectly free and voluntary on the part of God, proceeding from his infinite goodness. This is undoubtedly true ; but one thing is certain, that, when they were made to Christ, he was considered as the representative of his people, who was to fulfil the righteousness of the law in their name, and that not one of them would have been made, if he had not condescended to assume this character. It is also certain that all the blessings contained in the promises were purchased with his blood, which was the price of our salvation. For all the blessings of grace and glory we are indebted to his mediation. Hence God is said " to bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ," † or for his sake. As the life which was promised in the first covenant, would have come to us through the obedience of Adam, so the eternal life promised in the second covenant is the gift of God, through the obedience of his Son.

The third observation is, That the promises of the new covenant are free. In explaining this particular, it is necessary to attend to the distinction of absolute and conditional. By an absolute promise, is meant a promise which will be performed without respect to any qualification possessed, or

* Ps. xxxvi. 7—9.

† Eph. i. 3.

any work done, by the person to whom it is made. The performance of it depends exclusively upon the faithfulness of the promiser. In this sense, some of the promises are absolute; and I may quote as an example the first promise, formerly mentioned, which stands at the head of all the rest, in the list given by an Apostle, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."* It is evident that nothing in the sinner, prior to regeneration, can be a reason for imparting to him a principle of spiritual life; for while he is in the flesh, or a state of natural depravity, he cannot please God. To grace he is indebted for the communication of the Spirit, and not to the earnestness of his prayers, and his diligence in the use of the means. I request you to observe, that on this subject there is a want of correctness in the language which is frequently employed. There is a way of talking of absolute promises, as addressed to sinners in the Gospel, which, although it recommends itself to the inattentive, by seeming to exalt the grace of God, is not agreeable to truth. As an absolute promise must without fail be performed, it would follow that, if the promise of regeneration, which is suspended upon no condition, was made to sinners without distinction, they should all, at one time or another, be brought into a state of salvation. The conclusion is unavoidable; but, as none of us would choose to acquiesce in it, we must reject the premises, and hold that this absolute promise is not addressed to sinners in general, but to the elect alone, or rather, is a sort of promissory prediction of what God purposes to do in reference to those who were redeemed by his Son. If there are any other absolute promises—and in this class may be reckoned the promises of the unchangeable love of God to his people, and of the constant inhabitation of the Holy Ghost in their souls—they are made to persons who are in covenant with God by faith. No absolute promise can be made to a sinner, simply considered as such. Other promises suppose some qualification of the person to whom they are made, or some work to be done by him, before these are performed. Such promises some call conditional; but, if condition is understood to mean that

* Heb. viii. 10.

which gives a just title to the promise, we must say, that all the promises of the covenant of grace are unconditional, there being no such thing as merit of any kind, even in the saints. If, however, the term merely signifies something which precedes the enjoyment of particular blessings, it must be acknowledged that many of them are conditional, although the use of this term ought to be avoided. The remission of sins is not promised to every man, but solely to him who believes; nor eternal life to persons of every description, but to those alone who are pure in heart, and persevere to the end. Yet even those promises are free; because, if faith and holiness are previously required, these qualifications are the subject of other promises, which absolutely depend upon the faithfulness of God. They are resolvable into the promise of regeneration, which we have seen is absolute, with respect to the elect. God, therefore, when he demands certain qualifications in men, as necessary to the performance of particular promises, must be considered merely as settling the order in which the blessings of salvation shall be communicated. The enjoyment of some, must precede the enjoyment of others. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also calls; and whom he calls, them he also justifies; and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies." * In short, however dear it cost our blessed Saviour to accomplish our salvation, upon us it is bestowed "without money, and without price." The whole building is of mercy; the hand of God is displayed in its commencement and its completion; and here, as in the second temple of the Jews, "the head-stone thereof shall be brought forth with shoutings, Grace, grace, unto it." †

When I stated the parts of which a covenant consists, I remarked that a penalty is frequently added, to be inflicted if one of the parties shall fail. Thus, when the covenant of works was made with our progenitor, and abstinence from the fruit of the tree of knowledge was enjoined as the condition, God said to him, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." There was no penalty in the covenant of grace, because Jesus Christ, our Representative, could not fail; and his indefectibility arose from the mysterious consti-

* Rom. viii. 30.

† Zech. iv. 7.

tution of his person. He was a man, but not a mere man, for he was at the same time the Son of God. As all creatures are capable of change—and the highest have changed, as we know from the conduct of those angels who kept not their first estate—in a covenant made with a mere creature, however pre-eminent in nature and endowments, a penalty is introduced with propriety. But our blessed Saviour being immutable in his Divine person, and the human nature being established in a state of holiness by its union to him, a penalty could have no place in a federal transaction in which he was concerned. Let it not be imagined, that this statement is contradicted by the fact that sufferings were inflicted upon Christ. In these, I acknowledge, a penalty was executed; but it was the penalty of the covenant of works, to which he submitted as an essential part of the condition of the covenant of grace. If it were the condition of a covenant which one man made with another, that the latter should engage in laborious services, or expose himself to danger, or endure pain, it would be absurd to call his cost and trouble a penalty, which is totally distinct from the condition, and can have no place till the covenant is violated. Christ suffered penal evil; it was not, however, inflicted for any failure on his part, but submitted to as the means of establishing the covenant, and obtaining for his people the promised reward.

As there was no penalty in relation to the Surety, so there is none in relation to his people, for this obvious reason, that he fulfilled the covenant for them, and completely established their right to the promises. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”* It is acknowledged that there are threatenings addressed to those who have entered into the covenant by faith, to deter them from disobedience, and that these are executed when they transgress. “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.”† These visitations may indeed be called penalties or punishments, but usually receive the milder character of chastisements, because they are inflicted by the

* Rom. viii. 1.

† Ps. lxxxix. 30—32.

hand of God, not as an avenging Judge, but as a merciful Father; and are not intended for the destruction, but for the good of the sufferer. They are not penalties in the common acceptation of the term, for a penalty is the evil of pain, to which a person is subjected for a crime, and is designed to satisfy the law by a just retribution. But it is not satisfaction to justice which is the object of the afflictions of believers: the intention of them is, both to testify that sin is displeasing to God, and to lead them to repentance and amendment. Severity is mingled with love: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* Their afflictions may, therefore, be considered in the light of blessings, and as connected with the promises of the covenant, because they are subservient to their sanctification and final happiness. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."†

Having given you a view, at considerable length, of the covenant of grace, I now proceed to speak of what has been called the administration of it, but might be more correctly called the dispensation of grace, which is founded upon it.

I begin by observing, That the blessings of the covenant are committed to our Saviour, that he may distribute them according to his own will, and the will of his Father, which in this as in every other matter perfectly harmonize. This honour has been conferred upon him, that the blessings which were purchased with the infinitely valuable price of his blood should be at his disposal, and that sinners should be reminded of their unspeakable obligations to him, by receiving every good thing immediately from his hands. This constitution is agreeable to our notions of fitness and justice; for the fulfilment of the condition of the covenant gave him a right to the promises, and put him in full possession of their inestimable treasures. Accordingly, after his resurrection he told his disciples, that "all power was given to him in heaven and in earth;"‡ evidently meaning, that it was given to him in consequence of his sufferings and death. Long before, the holy Psalmist, looking forward in the Spirit of

* Heb. xii. 6.

† 2 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.

prophecy, had said, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." * His words are explained by those of Peter to the Jews, who were filled with astonishment at the miracle of Pentecost: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." † Three things are observable in these words; that the gift of the Holy Ghost to our Saviour was the performance of a promise made to him by his Father; that the promise was performed after his ascension; and that the Spirit was given to him, that he might pour him out upon men like the rain which falls upon our fields. Our Lord himself has assured us, that he has received "power over all flesh" from his Father, "that he may give eternal life" ‡ to his peculiar people; and in the following words he teaches us, that upon this donation is founded the dispensation of grace, which was established by his authority, and will be carried on to the end of the world. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." || Hence follow the gracious invitations and promises of the Gospel: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." § This important truth is more distinctly expressed in the following passage. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into

* Ps. lxxviii. 18. † Acts ii. 32, 33. ‡ John xvii. 2.

|| Matth. xi. 27. § Ib. 28.

him in all things, which is the head, even Christ ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of the body in love." *

In explaining the administration of the covenant of grace, it is remarked by Theological writers, that, in relation to men, it assumes the form of a testament, or a deed by which a person bequeathes his property to his heirs, to be enjoyed by them after his decease ; or that its blessings are conveyed to us in a testamentary form. By some of them, much importance is attached to this view of the subject, and they illustrate it at great length, and with a minuteness of detail, tracing the metaphor and similitude in this, as in other instances, to every point of resemblance which a lively fancy can suggest. Accordingly, they tell us of the testator, the legacies, the legatees, and the executor. The testator is Christ himself ; the legacies are the blessings of salvation ; the legatees are sinners ; and the executor is also Christ, who differs in this respect from a human testator, that, although he died to confirm his testament, he rose again, and is now alive to carry it into effect. Particulars of this kind may arrest the attention of the multitude, and obtain their approbation and applause ; but they exhibit a Divine dispensation too much in the shape of a human transaction, and tend to degrade it by the association of low and familiar ideas. One reason that some Divines enlarge upon this view of the covenant is, that, in their opinion, it is calculated to exhibit, to the greatest advantage, the freeness of its administration ; for a testament, they say, is a deed of grace, without conditions properly so called. But this is a mistake ; for, although men do commonly make a free conveyance of their property in their latter will to their heirs, they sometimes burden it with conditions, upon the performance of which the enjoyment of the property depends. It is not, therefore, from the testamentary form of the covenant, that the freeness of its administration can be justly inferred, but from other circumstances unconnected with this view of the subject. It does not

* Eph. iv. 8, 11—16.

therefore follow, that those who do not approve of this view are enemies to the doctrine of grace, although some of them may have been so, because that doctrine may be more successfully maintained upon different grounds. With respect to the assertion, that the legatees of this testament were sinners in general, I question whether it is perfectly accurate. A legatee of an unconditional testament has an undoubted right to the property bequeathed to him, and nothing but injustice can prevent him from enjoying it. His right is complete by his nomination in the testament; it is not necessary that he should come forward and claim the inheritance; it is the business of the executor to put him in possession of it. Were all men the legatees in the testament of Christ, all men would be entitled to salvation, and without any effort on their part to attain it, would infallibly be saved. But those who call them the legatees, mean nothing more than that by this deed salvation is offered to them, and will be bestowed upon all who accept of it; and at the same time they call this an unconditional testament. Their ideas are confused and contradictory; for if none shall obtain the inheritance but those who claim it by faith, it is evident that, in a qualified sense, the testament is conditional, and that, in strict language, the only legatees are believers. If these observations are just, it will follow, that the view of the testament which is given in some systems and treatises on the covenant of grace, is incorrect. The following statement of a late writer is, in my opinion, more agreeable to truth. "As the promissory part of the covenant respecting the elect was, by the dying Redeemer, turned into a testament, it necessarily follows that the legatees can be none other than those to whom the promises were originally made by the Father; the promissory part of the covenant regulating the testamentary. To whomsoever the promises were made in Christ, to them, and to them alone, are the promises made by him (in the gospel), otherwise his promises would be more extensive as to their objects than his Father's are; that is to say, he would promise eternal life to them to whom the Father never did; a doctrine not to be readily admitted, as neither agreeing with his delegated authority, nor

with his fidelity in promising. For, if eternal life be bequeathed to all, how is it bestowed on so few?"

"The covenant of grace," says our Confession of Faith, "is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed."* We have already seen, that, by the covenant of grace, the Confession means a transaction between God and men themselves, in which "he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation through Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved."† The word testament does often occur in our translation, and it has been remarked, that the original term *διαθηκη* signifies both a testament and a covenant. Its primary meaning is "testament;" but in Scripture it frequently occurs in the sense of *συνθηκη*. You have seen that, by our translators, it is sometimes rendered "testament" improperly, and that "covenant" should have been preferred, as when Christ is called the Mediator and the Surety of a testament; characters to which no distinct idea can be affixed. I believe that there are many other passages in which "covenant" should have been substituted for "testament;" and I am not sure that there is more than one passage in which the latter word should be used, namely, in the two following verses of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."‡ Attempts have been made to shew, that even here the word "covenant" should be used; but as they seem to be forced and unnatural, I abide by the common translation, and admit that, in this instance, the Apostle, taking advantage of the double meaning of *διαθηκη*, alludes to it in the sense of a testament. But he alludes to it, I apprehend, not to lead us into a train of speculation upon the new covenant as converted into a testament, and into all the details of such a transaction, but merely to illustrate the subject which he was discussing, the necessity and the effect of the death of Christ. The idea of a testament was sug-

* Conf. c. vii. §. 4.

+ Ib. §. 3.

‡ Verses 16, 17.

gested by the mention of the eternal inheritance in the preceding verse. As an inheritance is conveyed from one person to another by a testament, this designation may be given to the covenant of grace, because it conveys to us the inheritance of eternal life, and conveys it in virtue of the death of the Surety. It was with the covenant of grace as it is with a testament. As the death of the testator is necessary to render a testament valid, so the death of Christ was necessary to ratify the covenant, and to make its promises sure to his spiritual seed. It is the necessity of the death of Christ which the Apostle intended to establish, and the notion of a testament is incidentally introduced solely for the purpose of illustrating the point. Salvation comes to us through his death, as an inheritance comes to the legatees through the death of a testator. I do not positively affirm that this is the only passage in which *διαθήκη* should be rendered a testament; but I am persuaded that the propriety of this translation is more apparent here than in any other place; and, although I will not presume, in opposition to a formidable array of Theologians, to discard this view of the covenant of grace, yet I cannot help thinking that it rests upon a slender foundation, that undue importance has been attached to it, and that it has been dwelt upon with unnecessary prolixity.

In speaking of the administration of the covenant of grace, we must consider it as carried on under two distinct economies, of which the one preceded, and the other is subsequent to the coming of Christ in the flesh.

That there was a dispensation of grace prior to the coming of Christ, is evident to every person who reads the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It commenced immediately after the fall, when the first intimation of mercy was made, and continued till the death of our Saviour, when it was formally abolished. That it was virtually the same with the present dispensation, and differed from it only in form, may be proved by a variety of considerations. The exhibition of the seed of the woman as the ground of hope to the guilty, was the preaching of the gospel to our first parents in paradise; and the same object was pointed out to the patriarchs in subsequent revelations, and to the Jews by their typical institu-

tions, and the voice of the prophets. Hence the mission of Jesus Christ is represented as the fulfilment of the ancient predictions. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." * The Apostle Paul affirms that the gospel which he was employed in preaching, had been published long before to Abraham, and that those who believed it, were admitted to a participation of the same privileges with the patriarch: "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." † The covenant established with him was virtually the same covenant, which is still established with believers; for it contained the great promise, in which all other blessings are involved, that God would be a God to him, and to his seed after him; and it is called by an Apostle, "the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ," ‡ that is, the covenant of grace. The unity of the two dispensations, notwithstanding their apparent discrepance, is manifestly implied in the following words: "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son." || The substance of the revelation is the same, although the persons by whom it was communicated were different.

I request your particular attention to the two following passages, from which it appears, that the dispensation under which the ancient church lived, was connected with the covenant of grace, being founded on the atonement of Christ, by which the covenant was ratified. "Him," says Paul, "God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." § Remark the expression, "the remission" or passing by "of sins that are past." These, it is acknowledged, are the sins which were committed

* Luke i. 68—70. † Gal. iii. 8, 9. ‡ Ib. 17. || Heb. i. 1.
§ Rom. iii. 25.

in the ages prior to the manifestation of Christ. God passed them by, or remitted them in the exercise of his forbearance; he was gracious to the guilty persons, and received them into favour, although no expiatory sacrifice of sufficient value had yet been offered for them. How was it consistent with his justice to do so? This difficulty is removed by the mission of the promised Redeemer, who has made an atonement of infinite value, the virtue of which reaches back to the beginning of time, and forward to the end of it. In exercising mercy towards those who lived before his coming, God had a respect to this atonement, and he acted towards them like a creditor, who lets his debtor go free, although payment has not yet been made by his surety, because he has full confidence in him, that he will fulfil his engagement. The other passage is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in quoting it, I shall correct our translation by substituting covenant for testament, which in our version is twice employed improperly. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."* The transgressions which were under the first covenant, were the sins of the peculiar people of God under the covenant of Sinai, the sacrifices offered for which could deliver them only from the temporal penalties of the law; yet many of them obtained the full pardon of their sins, so that God did not enter into judgment with them, either in this life or in the next, on the ground of the great sacrifice which was to be offered in the fulness of time. Christ was the Mediator of the new covenant for the redemption of those sins, or assumed this character that he might expiate them, and actually did so by the shedding of his blood. Hence it appears that those, who lived under the law of Moses, were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as those who live under the gospel.

Our Lord may be considered as sustaining the office, and performing the duties of a Mediator before his incarnation. It is not a vain opinion of the Jews, that it was the second Person of the Trinity, who gave the promise of mercy to our first

* Heb. ix. 15.

parents in paradise, appeared to the patriarchs, published the law from Sinai, conducted the church in the wilderness, and managed its affairs during the ages which followed. It is certain, that a Divine Person did often appear under the ancient economy, and as there is no reason to think that it was the Father, whom no man has seen, we conclude that it was the Son, who assumed the form of that nature in which he was after to sojourn upon earth. He was the Angel of God's presence, and the Angel of the covenant, concerning whom these three particulars are worthy of attention ; that he was a Divine Person, for the name of God was in him, and the power of pardoning or not pardoning sin belonged to him ; that he acted in an official capacity, for he was an angel or messenger ; and that his office was connected with the gracious dispensation which was then established, for he was the Messenger of the covenant. As far as that dispensation was carried on by revelation of the Divine will, we are expressly assured, that it was under his direction and superintendence. It was the Spirit of the Messiah, Peter says, " who testified beforehand" in the prophets, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." *

The administration of the covenant, during this period, was carried on, as we have seen, by personal appearances of the Son of God, by the ministry of the prophets, by the miraculous and sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost, and by the various institutions which God gave to the Church. Sacrifices were offered soon after the fall ; and as they could not be suggested by reason, nothing seeming to be more unnatural than to propitiate the Deity by the blood of the lower animals ; and as, if they had been a human invention, they would not have been acceptable to God, we must believe, that they were appointed by himself, to prefigure the oblation of our Saviour, and to direct the faith and hope of mankind to him, for deliverance from the curse. The sacrifices of the Jews were enjoined, and every thing respecting them was regulated, by Divine command. It is an error to consider the ceremonial law merely as intended to guard them against idolatry ; and still farther from the truth, to imagine that

* 1 Pet. i. 11.

several of its rites were borrowed from heathen usages; an opinion which is derogatory to its honour, and besides, is incapable of proof, the practices of the Egyptians, in which the resemblance is traced, being known to us only by Greek authors, who, living a thousand years after the death of Moses, were as ignorant of the state of matters in his age, as we are. The legal institutions, says an Apostle, "were shadows of things to come, but the body is of Christ."* His meaning obviously is, that such a representation was given by them of Christ, his office, his sacrifice, and its effects, as is given of a man by the projection of his shadow; a representation which shews the outline, or general form, but does not exhibit his features. The information communicated to the people of God, was obscure and imperfect; but still there was a revelation which sufficed "for the time then present," as it enabled them, through faith in the promised Redeemer, to obtain eternal salvation. Some degree of light was thrown upon the figures of the law by the prophecies, which became clearer and clearer, as the time drew nearer for his manifestation in the flesh.

"The Old Testament," says the seventh article of the Church of England, "is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. Therefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises." Although there is no express mention of eternal life in the law of Moses, yet it was implied, as our Saviour has shewn, in the declaration, that God was the God of the patriarchs; and, we are assured by an Apostle, that "they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly."† This hope was retained by their descendants, who also looked for an inheritance beyond the grave, of which Canaan was a type. Although the law was much enforced by temporal rewards and penalties, these were not, and could not be, its only sanction, since God was related to the Israelites as well as to us, as their moral Governor and Judge; and, if there was a dispensation of grace, it must have held out the same blessings to be enjoyed, and the

* Col. ii. 17.

† Heb. xi. 16.

same consummation to be expected, which are exhibited in the promises of the gospel. Accordingly, it is certain that, as believers under the ancient economy were justified by faith, and were favoured with the presence and consolations of the Holy Ghost, so they looked for perfect and eternal salvation in another state of existence. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."*

The administration of the covenant, since the coming of Christ, is a subject so well understood, that it may be passed over with a few observations. The gospel makes known to us the eternal counsel between the Father and the Son, displays the riches and freeness of divine grace, offers salvation to all who hear it, and comforts believers by its promises of present and future blessings. All the other ordinances are channels by which the benefits which Christ purchased are communicated. In particular, baptism and the Lord's supper sustain a peculiar character, being sacraments or seals; that is, sacred institutions of Divine appointment, in which, "by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." The design of them is to declare, that the persons to whom they are administered, are in covenant with God, have a right to its blessings, and shall obtain the everlasting inheritance; that so their faith and hope may be confirmed, and they may be excited to perform that obedience which God requires from those whom he has admitted into his friendship.

The present dispensation is distinguished from the past, by the superior clearness of its manifestations. What was formerly exhibited under the veil of types, is now openly revealed. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." All the information is given which is suitable to our present condition, and which our minds are at present capable of receiving; and, in consequence of the difference between the twilight of the law and the bright day of the gospel, the people of God far excel their predecessors in the measure of their knowledge; so that the Baptist himself, who enjoyed

* Ps. lxxiii. 24, 26.

greater advantages than the prophets, is surpassed by the meanest member of the Church, who is illuminated by the Spirit. Again, it is distinguished from the former dispensation, by the more abundant influences of the Spirit. An Evangelist having remarked, that Jesus spoke of the Spirit, which they who believed in him should receive, adds, "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified;"* not meaning that he had not been given at all, but that he had not yet been given in that fulness of his influences, which was enjoyed when our Lord ascended to heaven, and the Christian dispensation commenced. God promised in the latter days, or in the days of the Messiah, "to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh," and the gospel is called the "ministration of the Spirit." Hence, as there is now greater light, there is also greater liberty. The people of God, in ancient times, being under tutors and governors, to use the words of Paul, † although sons, differed not from servants; but now they are sons freed from every restraint, and in full possession of their privileges. The different states of mind arising from the two dispensations, are pointed out in the following words: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."‡ Lastly, the present dispensation is distinguished from the past, by its extent; the one having been confined to the nation of Israel, at least after the formal separation from other nations, at the time of the Exodus, but the other embracing as its object the whole human race. Hitherto it has not been universal; but its limitation has not arisen from its nature, as was the case with respect to the Jewish economy, nor from any express prohibition, but from the inactivity of Christians, and from the secret arrangements of Providence, which fixes the times and the seasons for accomplishing its own designs. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the command of Christ to his Apostles; and ere long, God will have respect to his covenant, the covenant which he made with his Son, and "will give to him the heathen for

* John vii. 39.

† Gal. iv. 2.

‡ Rom. viii. 15.

his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

The great design of the administration of the covenant of grace, is to impart its benefits to those for whom they were intended. It is accomplished by the preaching of the gospel, in which salvation is offered to sinners; and by the power of the Spirit, who works faith in the hearts of those who were chosen in Christ to eternal life. It is only by faith that we can obtain an interest in the covenant; agreeably to the solemn declaration, "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."* As the descendants of Adam came under the obligation of the covenant made with him, by successively entering upon existence; so men become connected with the covenant which was made with Christ, by being born into the world of grace.

It concerns every person, therefore, to inquire, whether "God has made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." It is an inquiry intimately connected with his eternal welfare, for by this covenant alone salvation can be enjoyed. How shall this important point be ascertained?

First, He who has entered into covenant with God, is a convinced and awakened man; for, although its benefits are offered to all, none but those who feel their need, will accept of them. Peace with God, which the covenant has established, will be prized and sought by those alone, who, conscious of guilt, dread his displeasure and vengeance. By the secure and careless world, the proposal of reconciliation is disregarded. Conviction of sin, by the application of the law to the conscience, is the first step in the process, by which men are excited to take hold of God's covenant, that they may make peace with him. Secondly, He who has entered into this covenant, "has fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before him."† This is a description by an Apostle, of those who have an interest in the promises, and in the strong consolation which flows from them. They have fled from the wrath of God, which pursued them according to the tenor of the first covenant, to the Mediator of the second, whose

* Mark xvi. 16.

† Heb. vi. 18.

blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel. In the next place, He who has entered into this covenant, has founded his hope of salvation upon the righteousness of Christ, by which it was fulfilled. If this was the condition of the covenant, he alone who consents to it, can have any right to the promises; those who go about to establish their own righteousness, in vain expect to enjoy its blessings, and are guilty of an impious attempt to disannul the eternal agreement between the Father and the Son. This is the tendency of the doctrine of the merit of good works, in the mildest form in which it can be proposed. Allow that they are performed by the assistance of grace, and that nothing is required but sincere obedience, still it is a new condition, totally different from the original one. The admission of any thing, however qualified, even of faith itself, as the ground of our acceptance, is subversive of the covenant of grace. The notions of some men may be confused, and their expressions inaccurate, while the exercises of their hearts are humble and evangelical; they may seem to trust in their own righteousness, while before God they renounce it as utterly insufficient; but, if there is any man who distinctly and deliberately depends upon it, as he betrays the spirit, so he is under the authority of the old covenant, which ministers condemnation and death. “As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.”* Lastly, He who is in covenant with God, is a holy person; for this, we have seen, is its first promise: “I will put my laws in their minds, and in their hearts will I write them.” It found him a sinner, but it has made him a saint. Its design, to re-unite men to God in the bonds of friendship, could not be accomplished without the sanctification of our nature; between which, in its unregenerated state, and a Being of infinite purity, there is a mutual repugnance, and communion is impossible. The promises of the covenant not only furnish motives to obedience, but hold out that aid by which the people of God are enabled to perform it. And it is the character of believers, that they do not rely upon their own powers, and attempt to serve God in their own strength, but depend

* Gal. iii. 10.

upon his grace, which works in them both to will and to do ; and that they ascribe to him all the praise of their success.

To the man who perceives in himself those evidences of his interest in the covenant, we may say, ‘ Hail, thou that art highly favoured of the Lord, the Lord is with thee. Thy sins are pardoned, and thy immortal welfare is secured ; happy art thou, and it shall be well with thee. “ The lines are fallen to thee in pleasant places ; yea, thou hast a goodly inheritance ; for God is the portion of thy cup.” * Tossed and afflicted thou mayest be in this sinful world, but thou shalt not perish, for the covenant is sure and everlasting. The price of thy redemption is paid. Eternal life is thine by right, and, ere long, it shall be thine in possession. The power which created all things, and upholds them, will protect thee from dangers ; and the truth, which is more stable than the everlasting mountains, is pledged to realize thy hopes. “ My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.” ’ †

* Ps. xvi. 6.

† Ps. lxxxix. 34—36.

LECTURE LI.

ON THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

A MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN NECESSARY.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE OFFICE OF MEDIATOR.—CHRIST'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE.—RECONCILIATION TO GOD, THE EFFECT OF MEDIATION.—IN WHAT NATURE CHRIST IS MEDIATOR.—HE IS NOT MEDIATOR FOR ANGELS.—COMMENCEMENT AND DURATION OF HIS OFFICE.

THERE was not a Mediator in the first covenant, because man being in a state of innocence, was acceptable to his Creator, and having a pure conscience, was not disturbed by those terrors which haunt his guilty descendants, and make them recoil from intercourse with the Just and Holy One; yet, it was condescension on the part of God, to enter into a federal transaction with his own creature, to whom he owed nothing, and whose obedience he might have demanded, without stipulating any reward; and by making a covenant with him, he lessened, as it were, the natural distance between them, and put a veil upon his glory, the full splendour of which, even a spotless being would not have been able to endure.

Since the introduction of sin, the necessity of a Mediator has been generally felt and acknowledged. It was a consciousness of their own meanness, and unworthiness to approach the Supreme Being, the Lord of heaven and earth, which first gave rise to the idolatry of the Gentiles. Conceiving the celestial bodies to be animated, dazzled by their splendour, and believing that they had nearer access to the

Deity, and greater influence with him than the inhabitants of this inferior region of the universe, they paid religious homage to them, in the hope that through their patronage, they should be recommended to the notice of the Father of all. In process of time, they imagined an order of invisible beings, to whom the office was assigned of carrying the prayers of men to the Gods, and bringing commands and blessings from the Gods to men. "God," says Plato, "does not mingle in familiar intercourse with mortals, but all intercourse and conversation with him are maintained by means of demons," as those fancied beings were called. They conjoined with them those persons who had been distinguished upon earth by their virtues and illustrious achievements, and were exalted to the rank of demi-gods after their death.

Moses was the mediator of the covenant which God made with the Israelites at Sinai, and hence the law is said to have been given "by the hand of a mediator."* The interposition of a third person between that people and the Lawgiver was soon found to be necessary. The appearance of JEHOVAH amidst blackness, darkness, and tempest, filled the whole camp with alarm, and his voice issuing from the midst of devouring fire, so terrified them, that they said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."† How could they but tremble, in whose ears his holy law was proclaimed, and whose consciences told them that they had often transgressed it! The mediation of Moses consisted in his acting as an *internuncius*, or messenger, between God and the Israelites. God did not speak again to them with an audible voice; Moses published his commands; and as he spoke for God to the people, so he spoke for the people to God, presenting to him their promises, and vows, and requests.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, and the office as sustained by him, is to be understood in a higher and more perfect sense. He is not merely a prophet, who has spoken to us in the name of God, and an intercessor who recommends our petitions to him, but, by the sacrifice of himself, he has removed the obstacles which prevented our friend-

* Gal. iii. 19.

† Exod. xx. 19.

ly correspondence ; and while by his death he reconciled God to the guilty, by the influence of his grace upon their hearts, he reconciles the guilty to God.

A Mediator is one who intervenes between two parties at variance, and makes peace. The original word is μεσιτης, which signifies, ὁ μεταξὺ δυοῶν, *qui medius inter duo stat, vel est*. Unitarians, consistently with their principles, understand it to mean simply a messenger, a person sent by God to declare his will and his promises. But, although it does not admit of a higher sense in its application to Moses, it signifies much more when Christ is designated by it, as will appear, I trust, from what will be said in this lecture, and from the subsequent illustration of his priestly office. The word Mediator does not occur in the Old Testament, except in the translation of the Seventy, who render these words in Job, “ Neither is there any days-man (an old word for *umpire*) betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon both,” * in the following manner, Εἰθεὶν ὁ μεσιτὴς ἡμῶν, καὶ ἐλεγχῶν καὶ διακονῶν ἀνα μέσον ἀμφοτέρων, “ I wish that we had a mediator attentively hearing and judging between both.” The Hebrew מִשְׁפֵּט, is a *judge* or *arbiter*, employed in settling a dispute, and deciding who has the right side of the question. The passage refers rather to an umpire than a mediator.

The necessity of the mediation of Christ, arises from the existence of sin ; which being contrary to the nature and the will of God, renders those who have committed it obnoxious to his displeasure. As they had no means of appeasing his anger, the interposition of another person was requisite to atone for their guilt, and lay the foundation of peace. This is the great design of his office ; but it extends to all the acts, by which sinners are actually brought into a state of reconciliation, are fitted for holding communion with God, and are raised to perfection and immutable felicity in the world to come. It comprehends the particular offices which our Saviour is represented as sustaining, the prophetic, the sacerdotal, and the regal ; and it is by executing these that he completely performs the duties, and realizes the character of a Mediator. “ There is one God, and one Mediator between God and

* Job ix. 33.

men, the man Christ Jesus."* These particular offices will be afterwards considered in their order. In the present lecture, I shall confine myself to some general observations. My purpose is to inquire what are the necessary qualifications of a mediator between God and man, and to shew that they are all found in Him, to whom this character exclusively belongs.

In the first place, A mediator is necessarily a different person from either of the parties whom it is his design to reconcile; he can neither be the party which is offended, nor the party which has given the offence. The party offended may forgive the offence; but in this case a mediator is not wanted, so far as he is concerned. The party offending may be sorry for his conduct, and earnestly desire that peace may be made; but he may have no access to the party offended, or the latter may reject his advances, because he does not deem the proffered satisfaction to be adequate. In this case, a third person must interpose to adjust the difference, by the proposal of terms in which both will acquiesce.

It will be said, How could Jesus Christ be a Mediator, since it is certain that he was not in a state of neutrality, but was the party offended, being one with the Father and the Spirit? for, if we hold the common doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches that all the Divine persons subsist in one undivided essence, we must believe, that they were all displeased at the sin of man, and that the penalty denounced upon him had the sanction of their common authority. It is acknowledged that, according to this view, he whom we call Mediator must be considered as Lawgiver and Judge, and that, instead of expecting him to interpose in our favour, we had every thing to fear from his vengeance. Have we not reason to believe that it was he who appeared in paradise after the fall, and pronounced the doom of the whole human race upon our guilty progenitors? But let us remember, that the Scriptures introduce us to the knowledge of an economy or arrangement among the persons of the Godhead, by which different characters and offices are assigned to each, and new relations are sustained by them towards one another, and towards us. The law, for the violation of which we are con-

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

demned, is the law of the Father. He appears in the character of the Supreme Governor of heaven and earth. It is against him that the offence has been committed; it is his justice which demands the punishment of the guilty; and with him remains the power to extend mercy to them, and to prescribe the terms upon which it will be exercised. The Son having resigned, if I may speak so, those prerogatives to the Father, (resigned them, I mean, for this special purpose,) has assumed a different character. He does not pursue the claims of justice against sinners, but stands forth as their friend, to rescue them from their perilous situation, and to give such satisfaction as their offended Sovereign may demand. Thus, in this economy, he is distinguished from the Father, and is as closely related to us as the surety is to the person for whom he has become responsible. But, although between him and men an intimate connexion subsists, he is not one of them, considered as offenders; such union would have totally disqualified him for his office. A partaker of their nature, and even of its infirmities, he was perfectly free from that pollution with which it is stained in every other individual. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,"—so separate that he could approach to God in their name, and was looked upon by the Holy One with entire approbation. This point will afterwards come under our notice.

In the second place, A mediator must be independent, and master of himself. He must possess full ability for the duties of his office, and a full right to exert that ability in whatever way the design of the office may require. If it be necessary, in order to effect a reconciliation, that he should give satisfaction by sufferings and death, it is evident that he must have absolute power over himself; because those who are subject to the authority of another, cannot dispose of themselves and their services without his consent. Hence we perceive that, in the present case, a mere creature could not have been mediator, because something was required which a creature was not at liberty to give by his own spontaneous deed. Angels and men are the property of the Creator, which cannot be alienated without sacrilege. They must

wait his command before they venture to engage in any enterprize not comprehended in the original law of their nature. In particular, it should be considered that the life of man is his gift, and is not to be thrown away or surrendered, whatever good might be anticipated from the sacrifice, without the permission of the Giver. And here we may remark, that the substitution of one life for another, could not be justly admitted by a human government, for this obvious reason, that what the substitute had no right to give away, his superiors could have no right to accept. That the offer was voluntary, would not alter the case, because mere willingness and moral power are two things totally different. As our life is not our own, so our faculties are instruments with which we are furnished for the service of our Maker ; and the exertion of them for any purpose not commanded or permitted, is a waste or an abuse, for which we are reprehensible. We may not trifle with our happiness, although it may be thought, that if we choose to suffer we are unwise, but not criminal ; for it flows from the Divine bounty, and as it should be thankfully received, so it should be carefully preserved, and only parted with when duty calls, and an act of self-denial is demanded for the glory of God. Into the office of Mediator between God and man, which required the sacrifice of ease and life itself, no mere creature, although otherwise qualified, (which, however, was impossible,) could have intruded without presumption. He had not the requisite power, the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it again. But this power belonged to Jesus Christ, who was indeed bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and, if he had possessed no higher nature, would not have been a fit person to mediate between heaven and earth ; but, while the Scripture traces his human genealogy, and calls him the son of David, it is careful to inform us that he was also the Son of God. As a Divine person, he was not under the control of superior power, he was subject to no law, by which his activity was confined to a particular sphere ; he might interfere wherever his wisdom and benevolence pointed the way. He could stoop from his dignity, and draw a veil over his glory. Having assumed our nature, he might employ it as the instrument of accomplishing any service which would

promote the designs of the Divine government, and the interests of the human race. He might present it as a pure oblation to his Father, and give his blood as the ransom of our souls.

In the third place, A mediator must be a person who has great influence over both parties; he must possess the means and the power to terminate their mutual aversion, and unite them in the bonds of peace. It is not the interference of any person which will effect a reconciliation; he must be one who can conduct the business with prudence, and adjust the difference to the satisfaction of both parties. In the present case, the negotiation could be successfully carried on only by one in whom both could confide, and who had such interest with both, that, to use language employed on such occasions among men, they would be disposed to attend to his proposals. The object of the interposition was to bring together, upon amicable terms, God and men, between whom sin had caused a mutual alienation; to remove displeasure on the one hand, and aversion on the other, and to restore an intercourse founded in love. The necessary qualification was found in Jesus Christ; "Him the Father heareth always;" to his requests he never fails to lend a favourable ear. What would he refuse to a Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and whom he always loved; to a Son, who has shed at the foot of his throne blood more precious, not only than that of bulls and goats, but than the blood of the noblest and the holiest of the human race; a Son, who has so faithfully and honourably finished the work assigned to him, notwithstanding the most formidable difficulties; a Son, who submitted to humiliation, and sorrow, and death, that he might exalt the character of his Father, and give the highest manifestation of his glory to the universe? There was not another in heaven or on earth who had such claims to be heard, when he came forward to intercede for the guilty. To the interest which upon these grounds he possesses with the offended Lawgiver, no limits can be assigned. Infinitely acceptable to Him, both as his own Son, and as our Advocate, he may ask what he will, and it shall be granted to him. God will not retain his anger against those whom one so high in favour has taken under his protection, and recom-

mends to his approbation. His influence with the other party, whose consent is necessary to complete the reconciliation, is equally great. What power is he not able to exert upon them by means of his word, which casts down high thoughts and proud imaginations, and leads captive the willing mind? What can they refuse to a person of such dignity, who condescends to solicit them? How irresistible are the claims of his blood! How attractive is the display of his grace! If these motives should prove ineffectual to dispel their prejudices, and conquer their aversion, he has access to the springs of motion in the heart. He can send the Holy Spirit to persuade with gentle but irresistible efficacy; who, by a manifestation of wrath and of mercy, of the hopelessness of a contest with the Almighty, and the happiness flowing from his favour, leads them humbly to supplicate peace, and to accept the offered reconciliation with gratitude and joy.

In the fourth place, A mediator between God and man must be capable of suffering. The design of his office is to make reconciliation; and as God would not pardon sin without satisfaction to his justice, the design could not be accomplished unless the mediator would submit to the penalty; for only upon this condition would the offended Lawgiver receive them into favour. Had the redemption of man been merely an act of power, like the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the Son of God might have effected it without assuming our nature, and descending to a state of humiliation. But it was a moral work, which was to be conducted in conformity to the principles of the Divine government, and to terminate in a full display of its rectitude and purity. We need not here discuss the question, whether God could have pardoned sin without an atonement. Although we should venture to affirm that he could—and surely it is a venture which ill becomes beings of such limited views—it would be sufficient to know that he would not, as appears from the event; for hence it follows, that the qualification which we are considering, was indispensably necessary to a mediator. The Scriptures, upon the one ground or the other, represent the death of Christ as essential to the plan of our redemption, and ascribe our reconciliation to it: “When we were enemies,

we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." * It is an obvious corollary from these premises, that the Mediator must be a creature, for a creature alone can suffer; the Divine nature is impassible and immortal; its felicity is independent and immutable. But there is probably a great diversity of intelligent beings. We know of two orders, the human and angelical; and it may be asked, whether an individual of either might have assumed this office, or whether there was any reason why he should be exclusively a man? The answer is obvious. The Mediator must be a man, because, being a third person acting between two parties, with a view to reconcile them, he would not have been qualified for his undertaking if he had not possessed the nature of both. But there are two other reasons connected with the necessity of his sufferings. First, if he must undergo the penalty denounced upon the objects of his mission, an angel could not have been our substitute, because he might be annihilated, but could not die in the sense of the law; the death which the law threatened, being the separation of the soul from the body, while his nature is spiritual and uncompounded. Secondly, the expiation of sin must be made in the nature which sinned. The identity of nature seems to have been indispensable to the ends of justice. If a man dies for men, we see a case of righteous retribution; but nothing of this kind would have appeared if the burden of human guilt had been laid upon an angel. This doctrine is taught in the following words: "Forasmuch then as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."† The reason of the incarnation is assigned in the next verse: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."‡ The word rendered, by the aid of a supplement, "he took on him the nature," is *επιλαμβάνεται*, from a verb which signifies *to take hold of*, and *to help*: "Verily he did not help angels, but he helped the seed of Abraham,"

* Rom. v. 10.

† Heb. ii. 14, 15.

‡ Ib. 16.

and for this reason he took part of our flesh and blood, and not of the spiritual nature of angels.

In the fifth place, A mediator, the design of whose office is to reconcile God to the guilty, must himself be free from sin: "Such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners." * Would a man, who was himself a rebel, and whose presence would rouse the indignation of his prince, be a proper person to be employed in soliciting the pardon of his brethren in guilt? The perfect purity of the Mediator was necessary to the acceptance of his services. The law made men priests who had infirmity, and needed to offer first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people; and the character of the ministers, as well as the nature of the sacrifices, rendered the service unavailing to the expiation of moral guilt. Again, the purity of the Mediator was necessary to the fulfilment of that part of his office, which consisted in giving us an example that we might walk worthily of the state of reconciliation; and that this example might answer its design, it must be absolutely perfect. It must be one which we may implicitly imitate, without doubt and without danger of going astray. Once more, the Mediator between God and man is a source of sanctification, according to the saying of the Evangelist: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." † But how could we derive this blessing from him, if he were not himself perfectly holy? How could we be enlightened by him, if he were not light? When the angel announced his birth to the virgin, he said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." ‡ This primitive purity he retained during the course of his life, conversing and familiarly associating with sinners, but not learning their ways. He died, indeed, as a criminal, but he died for sins not his own: he "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." || Nay, he was not only free from actual transgression, but he was incapable of sin; so fortified against temptation, that he could not be seduced. It was an eternal covenant which God in-

* Heb. vii. 26. † John i. 16. ‡ Luke i. 35. || 1 Pet. iii. 18.

tended to establish by his ministry ; a covenant which should not be broken like the first. The first Adam was created in the image of his Maker, but his holiness was not an inalienable possession. Had the second Adam resembled him in mutability, the hopes of mankind might have been disappointed once more ; and the remedy proving insufficient, the case would have been desperate. But he stood firm in the severest trial. No argument, however subtle, could perplex his reason ; no solicitation, however powerful, could seduce his affections. Satan exhausted his arts in vain, and in vain did the world display its glories before him ; neither promises nor threatenings, neither flattery nor reproach, could excite a wandering thought, or an irregular desire. The Mediator has, therefore, accomplished the design of his office. By his immaculate sacrifice, the covenant is confirmed, its promises are sure to his spiritual seed, and there is no condemnation to those who believe in him. “ Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh ; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God !” *

In the last place, A mediator must be a person to whom men may have free access, that they may place confidence in him, and enter without fear into his communion. The design of his office would be defeated, if his character were repulsive, and his conduct were such as to keep them at a distance. They must be encouraged to throw themselves into his arms, to commit themselves to his protection and guidance, to entrust him with their most important concerns. It is by first gaining our confidence, and persuading us to connect ourselves with him, that he brings us back to God from whom we have revolted : “ No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” † That he is one whom we may humbly approach, and in whom we may hope, is evident from these considerations. First, although, in one of his natures, he is exalted far above us,

* Heb. ix. 12—14.

† John xiv. 6.

and above angels, who, in comparison with him, are less than nothing and vanity ; yet on the other, he is nearly related to us, our kinsman and our brother. It is a human voice which gently says, “ Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead.” * Secondly, he has felt our infirmities, and suffered our affliction, and may we not expect more tender, and more active sympathy, than if he had merely a speculative knowledge of our miseries ? John refers to the first consideration, when he says, “ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ;” † and Paul points out the second as a source of consolation in these words, “ In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” ‡ Thirdly, we have express assurances that he bears a most tender affection to us. It would be nothing that he is a man like us, nothing, that he has experienced our sorrows, if we had not positive evidence that his love to us is real, constant, and infinite ; for men are often hard-hearted to their brethren, and sometimes those who have tasted the evils of adversity appear not to have become more compassionate to others, but to have their feelings blunted and destroyed. But in Jesus Christ we find a heart which responds to the cry of distress, and a tongue which speaks a word in season to the weary. Love displayed in his life and in his death, and unchanged in his state of exaltation, invites sinners to approach, and assures them of a cordial reception : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life.” ||

To the duties of his office, I have been led frequently to refer when explaining his qualifications. They will be particularly considered when we give an account of the several offices which are implied in the general one of Mediator. As Mediator, he is the representative of God to us, the image of the invisible God, the person in whom he is seen ; and the light of the glory of God shines in his face. In consequence of the darkness which sin had spread over the minds of men, and the alienation of heart which it had produced, the knowledge of God was in a great measure lost, but it is restored

* Rev. i. 17, 18.

† John i. 14.

‡ Heb. ii. 18.

|| Matth. xi. 28. John vi. 68.

by the revelation of which he is the Author: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."* He has not only brought to light those doctrines which reason is supposed able to discover, but he has made known things which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, neither had it entered into the mind of man to conceive, the mysteries of the Divine nature, and the eternal counsels concerning human redemption, which had been hidden from ages and generations. It is owing to the mediation of Christ, that such a discovery has been made of the Divine character as is adapted to the present circumstances of man; which, instead of depressing, elevates him, instead of awakening fear, inspires hope and joy. We behold the Father in the face of the Son, and every feature is marked with benignity. The terrors of his majesty have passed away, and we conceive it possible that worms of the dust should hold communion with the Possessor of heaven and earth. The rays of the sun come to us through a cloud, which abates their dazzling splendour, and attempts them to the human eye. To the question of Solomon, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" we can answer, He will dwell with them; he has sent his beloved Son to reunite them to himself in the bonds of eternal friendship.

This leads me to remark, that the Mediator has established that peace between God and man which it was the object of his office to effect. For this purpose, it was necessary, as I formerly intimated, that the efficacy of his mediation should extend to both parties; that he should reconcile God to men, and men to God. The reconciliation of God to us, by which I mean the appeasing of his anger, and the procuring of our pardon and acceptance, was accomplished by his sacrifice, which, by its intrinsic value, and the willingness with which it was offered, fully satisfied the demands of justice. The reconciliation of sinners to God, which consists in destroying their natural enmity against him, and inspiring love and confidence, is effected by the power of his grace. The consequence is, that God dwells in them, and they dwell in God. Peace on earth, and good will towards men, are the fruits of

* John i. 18.

his mediation : “ This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord : I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” *

From what has been now said, it appears that he is the medium through which intercourse is carried on between heaven and earth. Through him the love of God descends upon us, and through him our prayers, and thanksgiving, and all our holy services, ascend to God. He obtains for us all spiritual blessings. They are granted in consideration of his merit, and in answer to his request ; and they are not dispensed immediately by the Father, but pass to us through the hands of his Son. The fountain of Divine love has found a channel, in which it flows to refresh and gladden the souls of the guilty and unworthy. The heavens are opened ; and peace, and righteousness, and salvation, have come down to the habitations of mortals : “ Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.” In return, we present to him the sacrifices which he requires, of gratitude, praise, and obedience, accompanied with humble supplications for new communications of his goodness. Our services, being imperfect and mingled with sin, might be rejected ; but the iniquities of our holy things were expiated by our merciful High Priest, and our oblations presented by him meet with a favourable reception, to which they are not entitled on their own account. His mediation is the basis of all acceptable religion ; it gives us boldness to enter into the holiest of all. “ Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

It appears that the duties of the mediatorial office are performed on earth and in heaven, as the High Priest of the Jews ministered both in the court, where the altars of sacrifice stood, and in the holy of holies. If it be inquired in what

* Heb. viii. 10—12.

precise nature Jesus Christ is Mediator, I would say that he executes the office in both natures, the Divine and the human. The Scripture characterises him as the man Christ Jesus; but that man was united to the second person of the Trinity. Considered as Mediator on the part of God, he discharges his duty, it has been said, by his Divinity; for it is as God that he sends the Holy Spirit, reigns over the church, reveals the mysteries which none could know but he who is in the bosom of the Father, and performs other acts which imply sovereign authority and infinite power. Considered as Mediator on the part of man, he discharges his duty by his humanity; for it was as man that he died, rose from the grave, and ascended to heaven; as man that he took possession of heavenly glory in our name, and intercedes for us before the throne of his Father. But, in thus referring his mediatorial acts to their respective classes, we ought to be careful to avoid the affectation of accuracy, and not to lose sight of the personal union of his natures, in consequence of which they are one principle of operation in the work of redemption. Since the incarnation, both natures act together according to their peculiar properties. They are not confounded so as to make one nature; but, while they remain distinct, the person is one. Some things could be done only by one of them, as for example, the human nature alone could suffer and die; but the other is always to be understood as concurring with it. In the death of the human nature, the Divine co-operated, by a voluntary surrender of it to crucifixion, and by communicating such value to its sufferings, that they were an adequate atonement. It is only in the Divine nature that he can hold and exercise the supreme authority over all things, with which he is invested for the salvation of the Church; for it is manifest, that the Lord of heaven and earth must possess infinite knowledge, and wisdom, and power; but his human nature shares in this glory. It is seated at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers; and it will be the visible Judge in the great day, when all nations shall be assembled to receive their final sentence: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit

upon the throne of his glory.”* It is in the human nature that he has a fellow feeling of our infirmities, for it was as man that he suffered what we suffer; but his Divine nature goes along with his human in pitying us, and is the source of the consolation by which we are supported.

The Scripture calls Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and man. Some have affirmed that he is also the Mediator of angels, upon what authority they are best able to tell. The Bible does not say one word in their favour, and to dogmatize when it is silent, is surely to intrude into things not seen. All are agreed that he is not the Mediator of fallen angels, and an Apostle expressly assures us, that “he did not help them,” and therefore did not assume their nature. Another informs us, that “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;” † that is, he placed them in very different circumstances from those of men, who were condemned as well as they, but not by an irreversible sentence; whereas angels are consigned to a state of hopeless misery. He determined from the beginning to admit no negociation on their behalf. The peace, having been broken, was never to be restored. He has exhibited in their doom an awful example of severity, which will no doubt be productive of important consequences in the moral administration of the universe. The reason of this distinction between two classes of rebellious creatures we do not understand; but while we see justice taking its course upon the one, and grace extended to the other, with what intense feelings of gratitude should we extol and magnify Him, who so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son for its redemption! It is, then, of good angels that Christ is said to have been Mediator; and if you inquire, in what way he could sustain this character in relation to beings, who, having never transgressed, had no need of his interposition? you will be told, that he was not a Mediator of redemption to angels, but of preservation and confirmation. It was owing to him, that when others fell they stood, and by him such stability was given to the righteousness with which they

* Matt. xxv. 31.

† 2 Peter ii. 4.

were created, that they shall never lose it. If this doctrine be admitted, man will seem to have been hardly dealt with, who stood in as much need of such a Mediator as they, but not enjoying this benefit, yielded to temptation, and involved all his posterity in misery. The sovereignty of God may be deemed a sufficient answer to this difficulty; but if we proceed to ask, what occasion there could be for a Mediator between God and innocent beings whom he loved, and upon whom he was ready to bestow every necessary blessing without solicitation? whether the idea of a Mediator before any change had taken place in the original state of things, does not imply some imperfection in that state? and whether there is any thing in the constitution of our Saviour's person, and in the new covenant, which bears the most distant relation to angels? we shall not, I fear, receive a satisfactory answer. The truth is, that the opinion under review, is a mere conjecture, which does not receive the slightest countenance from Scripture; and when we go beyond the information which it gives, our speculations about angels are not more wise nor more worthy of attention, than the theories would be which in our idle hours we might form about the inhabitants of Saturn. The angels are said to be put in subjection to our exalted Redeemer; but this is very different from their being confirmed by him in holiness, and refers to a different period of their existence. They are said also,—if we understand them to be “the things in heaven,”—to be in him “gathered together in one,” with the things on earth;* but the obvious and natural sense is, that they are united with the saints in one society, over which he presides. By him the enmity subsisting between angels and men was destroyed; for when men are reconciled to God, and renewed after his image, angels love them and minister to them, and will joyfully receive them into their everlasting habitations. There is no doubt that in consequence of the mediation of Christ the happiness of angels is augmented: the cause is not, that they were the objects of his mediation, or that as Mediator he did any thing with a direct view to their good, but that a new revelation was given of the Divine character and perfec-

* Eph. i. 10.

tions, which these holy beings contemplate with delight. Hence the joy which they expressed at our Saviour's birth: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will towards men." If there are any other holy beings in the universe, this effect is not peculiar to angels; for the glory of God in redemption will increase the felicity of all to whom it is made known.

There is a question which relates to the commencement of the Mediatorial office, and which it might be improper to pass without notice, because it gave rise to a great deal of speculation not long ago, in one of the bodies into which our Church was then divided. It so happened that I paid little attention to it at the time, and am not acquainted with the arguments which were advanced by the opposite parties; but the one contended that Christ did not become Mediator till his incarnation, and the other assigned an anterior date to his office. It is not a proof of the falsity of a doctrine, that it is held by persons many of whose other views are erroneous, because they who are often wrong, may sometimes be right. It will not, however, serve to recommend the opinion that the mediation of Christ commenced at his birth, to know that it is a doctrine of the Church of Rome, which has been condemned by Protestant Divines. Roman Catholics maintain that Christ is Mediator only as man, and therefore consider him as not having entered upon his office, till he assumed our nature.

It is of importance to settle the meaning of terms, because when they are left vague and indeterminate, both parties may dispute with great vehemence, and seem to hold the most opposite creeds, while in reality there is no difference of sentiment. If by the mediation of Christ we mean his acts of humiliation, obedience, and suffering, we must say, that he became Mediator at his incarnation, because it was only in human nature that he could perform those acts. But, if we mean by his mediation, the whole of his agency in behalf of sinners, we must go back to the fall, and even into eternity, when the covenant was made between the Father and the Son. I can conceive some men who pride themselves in what they call metaphysical reasoning, (which, however, is often

the working of a dark and bewildered mind,) to object that, as the Mediatorial office implies subordination, our Saviour could not sustain it while he remained, if I may so speak, in his pure Deity, unallied to an inferior nature. If there is any force in this argument, it will prove too much; for the legitimate inference from it is, that still he is Mediator only as man; a position contrary to the doctrine of our Church, and to the most obvious conclusions from Scripture.

Those who claim the character of orthodox, and particularly such of them as aim at systematic accuracy, and delight in nice distinctions, have sometimes need to be reminded of their own admonition to heretics, not to allow reason to intermeddle with matters of pure revelation. It is of no consequence what may be the result of our speculations upon the nature and fitness of things; our faith in every point ought to be determined by the oracles of God. Now, if we consult the Scriptures with simplicity of intention, resolved not to cavil but to learn, we shall discover not a few grounds for believing, that our Redeemer acted as Mediator prior to his coming in the flesh. We shall find him acting towards men in the name of God, and towards God in the name of men, as he has acted since his incarnation. It is a mediatorial act, the act of a prophet, to reveal the will of God; and who needs to be told that he was the author of revelation under the old as well as the new dispensation? The prophets were his ministers as well as the apostles; and accordingly the Spirit who spoke in them is expressly called the "Spirit of Christ." * And it appears that he is called his Spirit, not merely because he testifies concerning him, but because he was sent by him. † Again, it is a mediatorial act, to exercise authority over the people of God, and to give laws for the regulation of their worship, and of their conduct towards God and man. It is the belief of Jews and Christians, that it was he, and not the Father, who promulgated the law to the Israelites in the wilderness, and as this opinion is consonant to his own declaration, that no man has at any time seen the Father, the Son being his representative to mankind, so it is confirmed by the proto-martyr Stephen, who, speaking of Moses,

* 1 Pet. i. 11.

† Lecture xxxiii. p. 156.

says, "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the Angel that spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us."*

But we read of none who spoke to him at that time but God. "Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice."† Who then could this angel who is called Jehovah be, but the angel who assumed the same character, when he appeared in the burning bush, the angel to whom the power belonged of pardoning or retaining sin, a power completely divine? This angel was God; but the title of angel or messenger implies, that he was acting in subordination to another, and destroys the argument that he could not be Mediator, till he had united himself to a created nature. And surely there is no difficulty in conceiving a person to be officially subordinate to another, although in essence and original dignity he is his equal. To intercede for man, is another act of mediation, which our Saviour performs in the heavenly state. In the first chapter of Zechariah, we find these words: "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"‡ It is most reasonable to think, that this was not a created angel, but the angel who spoke to Moses in Sinai, the second Person of the Trinity, to whom the administration of grace for the salvation of the church has been committed in all ages, and who was the immediate author of the ancient dispensation. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact mentioned in the preceding verses, that the messengers whom the Lord sent "to walk to and fro through the earth," and who evidently signify the ministers of providence, are represented as giving an account to this angel of the execution of their commission. Surely they did not give the account to a creature, but to God, in whose service they were engaged. I have only to add, that to deny that Christ was Mediator before his incarnation, leads to the denial of the existence of any covenant or transaction respecting our redemption till that period; because in that transaction he must have appeared as the friend and surety of man, and, according to the hypo-

* Exod. xix. 19.

† Acts vii. 38.

‡ Zech. i. 12.

thesis, he could not become such till he had assumed a nature capable of subjection and obedience.

It may safely be inferred, I think, from these things, that the mediation virtually commenced before our Saviour was made flesh, and dwelt among us in a visible form. I admit that, till he descended to the earth, that constitution of person, which the office required, was wanting, and some of its most important duties could not be performed; but, to conclude that, therefore, he performed none of them, would be illogical, and contrary to the evidence produced. When he assumed the body which God had prepared for him, as he came to do the will of God, so he was in a condition to fulfil it in every particular, to obey, to suffer, and to die. At his baptism, he was formally invested with the office, or more accurately, he was publicly recognised as the Messiah; and he dedicated himself to the service of his Father, in the work of our salvation. The visible descent of the Spirit upon him, was a symbol of the ample qualifications with which his human nature was supplied, and a voice from heaven attested the Divine approbation: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

How long Jesus Christ will continue to discharge the duties of his office, is a question about which there is a diversity of sentiment. The common opinion is, that the office will be perpetual. It seems reasonable to believe that, as by him sinners are reconciled to God, and admitted into communion with him, he will be the medium of intercourse even in the heavenly state. With this idea those passages of Scripture are understood to accord, which represent him as a Priest for ever, as ever living to make intercession, and ascribe to him an eternal kingdom.* On the other hand it is contended, that the office may be conceived to cease when its design is fully accomplished; that our Saviour having been appointed Mediator to bring sinners to God, and to a state of perfection, there will be no cause that he should any longer sustain that character, when all the saints have been redeemed from the earth, and being not only justified, but free from the slightest taint of sin, will have no need of an intercessor,

* Heb. vi. 20. vii. 25. Luke i. 33. &c.

and may hold immediate intercourse with the Holy One. The Scripture appears to favour the idea of the termination of his office, by saying, that when the end comes he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and be subject to him, and that then God will be all in all.* Those who maintain the perpetuity of the mediation, besides being influenced by what they deem scriptural authority, are actuated by zeal for the honour of our Saviour, which seems to them to require that he should for ever retain an office which has reflected so much glory upon him, and without which the happiness of the righteous could not be secured. Those who adopt the opposite opinion do not consider it as derogating from his glory in any degree, and persuade themselves that nothing can give a more exalted idea of his mediatorial character than to believe, that he has so perfectly re-united God and his sinful creatures, that his farther interposition is unnecessary. The work will stand upon the solid basis which he has laid, will need no repair, nor the constant care of the Architect to prevent it from falling into ruins. It is formed of such durable materials, and compacted with such skill, that it will last for ever. I have given you a general account of this controversy, but reserve the discussion of it to another opportunity, when it will again occur.

The wisdom which is displayed in the mediation of Christ, is worthy of the highest admiration. Human wisdom would have been confounded by the question, Who shall repair the breach between heaven and earth? Who shall engage his heart to approach to God, in the name of the guilty? A creature was too mean, and too weak, to undertake the arduous enterprise, and a Divine Person was too great, and too remote from us, to appear upon our side. The mediation is the work of Him who is wonderful in counsel, and who proposes the noblest ends and the fittest means.

What glory does the mediation reflect upon our Redeemer! Standing between heaven and earth, he conducts a negotiation, on which depend the interests of both. He stands alone; his own arm brings salvation, and of the people there is none with him. The work which he is performing, surpasses every

* 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

other in its nature and consequences. To him are committed the care of the Divine honour, and the happiness of the human race, and by him are all things made new ; human nature is raised from the ruins of the fall, paradise is regained, and the everlasting triumph of righteousness and truth over error and sin, is secured.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

